

WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME WHERE WE ARE RELYING ON TECHNOLOGY MORE THAN EVER, TO KEEP US IN TOUCH WITH OUR EDUCATION, FRIENDS AND FAMILY.



AS WE ARE ONLINE SO OFTEN IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP SAFE. WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT PASSWORDS, WHAT INFORMATION WE SHARE, CYBERBULLYING AND WHO WE COMMUNICATE WITH, ESPECIALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.



search



USEFUL CONTACTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Childline is a free confidential service for children and young people 0800 11 11 childline.org.uk
The Mix 0808 808 4994 themix.org.uk

Meic is the helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales.

Freephone: 0808 80 23456

SMS Text: 84001

IM/Online chat: www.meic.cymru

USEFUL CONTACTS FOR PARENTS

NSPCC 0808 800 5000

nspcc.org.uk

Family Lives 0808 800 2222

familylives.org.uk

Young Minds 0808 802 5544

youngminds.org.uk



**STAYING
SAFE
ONLINE IN
LOCKDOWN**



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?



SOMEONE COULD GAIN ACCESS TO YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION STORED ON YOUR COMPUTER, TABLET, MOBILE DEVICE OR GAMES CONSOLE. THIS INFORMATION IS OFTEN SOLD TO CRIMINALS.

THE PERSON YOU ARE CHATTING WITH MAY NOT BE WHO THEY SAY THEY ARE. PEOPLE MAY CONTACT YOU TO BULLY, ABUSE OR EXPLOIT YOU.
(GETSAFEONLINE.ORG, 2021)



WE NEED TO BE MINDFUL OF OUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT. WHAT WE PUT ON THE INTERNET IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND WILL STAY THERE, AND BE ACCESSIBLE IN THE FUTURE. COMMENTS YOU MAKE NOW, COULD AFFECT YOUR FUTURE PROSPECTS.
(ONLINESAFETYADVICE.ORG, 2021)



TOP TIPS FOR KEEPING SAFE ONLINE



- Do not share your passwords with anyone.
- Do not share personal information with anyone, this includes posting photos of you in your school uniform or any photos that could indicate where you live etc.
- Let your parents know what your up to online, keep them in the loop!
- Make sure your privacy settings are set up to protect you and your personal information.
- Don't click on links or open emails if you do not know or trust the source.
- Think before sharing personal or private images.
- Be kind online, do not post or share offensive material.
- If something feels wrong online speak to a trusted adult or contact one of the useful contacts overleaf.



(WG, 2021)

This rationale's aim is to explain the motive for producing the attached leaflet "Staying safe online in lockdown". The leaflet is aimed at 10 to 15-year olds, with a view to educating them on the prospective dangers of increased internet use at a time of national lockdown. The leaflet provides useful information to keep them safe and make them pre-emptively consider their actions online. There are also helpline contact details for children and parents, with a view to promoting conversations about online safety between the young person and their family. According to NSPCC (2021) "Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm". All people who work with children have safeguarding responsibilities. This has been made increasingly difficult with the lack of face to face contact during the periods of lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Child protection could be defined as the policies and procedures in place to protect and respond to a child who has suffered harm, abuse, or neglect (child protection company, 2020). To educate on the subject of e-safety, schools in the UK celebrate E-safety Week, which gives the opportunity to external stakeholders to visit schools and give information to children and young people on the topic of e-safety. During times of lockdown in Wales and the UK, the onus has been left on parents and carers to safeguard their children against online harms (internetmatters.org, 2020). This could be particularly difficult for parents who do not possess ICT skills. The online landscape is constantly developing and changing, and it is hard for parents to keep up with these changes. Providing leaflets to children can start a conversation at home around e-safety, allowing the parent and child to share a sense of responsibility for safeguarding.

There are several internet safety issues that children and young people could encounter with increased use of the internet during lockdown. Children are gaining their digital independence younger, with nearly 50% of 9 to 10-year olds having their own smartphone and nearly 83% of young people aged 12 to 15 have smartphones (OFCOM, 2019). This will likely have an increase on the chance of encountering dangers online. The possible dangers that children and young people could encounter are fraud, grooming, cyber-bullying and leaving a negative digital footprint. There are now several laws pertaining to the protection of children and young people on the internet. To protect children and young people from grooming, the Ministry of Justice (2017) brought into force section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. This section makes it illegal for anyone over 18 to communicate with a child online for sexual purposes. To protect children and young people from cyberbullying section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act (1988) could be applied. This act makes it an offence for anyone to send offensive messages or materials online and misinformation which defames someone. Similarly, Section 127 of the Communications Act (2003) makes electronic messaging which intends the recipient harm, distress, or annoyance an offence. How effective these laws are in protecting children is hard to measure. The perpetrators of cyberbullying are usually of school age and are therefore given anonymity in court proceedings so therefore there are not many cases in the public domain

available for scrutiny. According to the NSPCC (2020) 10,391 cyber-crimes against children were recorded across the UK in 2019 -2020. These crimes involved sexual offences such as online grooming, which was an increase of 16% from the previous year. The true figure is probably much higher as some young people do not report online abuse (Powell-Jones, 2019).

The most widely publicised issue in the media could be considered online grooming. This could also be considered the most dangerous issue as it could lead to physical harm. Reporting of online crime is clearly an issue. One specific case that could be explored is the case of Breck Bednar. This 14-year-old boy was groomed in an online gaming chat room. The perpetrator, Lewis Daynes, lured Breck to his home, sexually assaulted him and murdered him. His mother had concerns and rang the police to report, but her report was not considered at the time. This obviously led to devastating consequences for the family of Breck. The police had serious failings in this case, they did not investigate Breck's mother's initial complaint. If they had they would have found that Daynes had previous history of sex offences against young boys. His mother took all the steps to safeguard Breck, taking away his computer etc but Daynes sent him a phone in secret to continue the communication. Breck's family raised the concern that if Breck had been a girl, would the police have taken their complaint more seriously (Moore, 2016). Lessons were learned from this incident by Leicester Police and in 2018 they launched a film targeted at teenagers called 'Breck's Last Game' which depicted what happened to Breck, to raise awareness of the dangers online. The Byron Report (2007) states that one of the greatest risks to communicating online is 'stranger danger'. If that is the case, the laws need to reflect this and concerning communications reported to police need to be subjected to scrutiny. Police need to be able to access information easily, avoiding the privacy notices of social media giants, to prevent serious crimes being committed against children. Social media platforms need to take responsibility in safeguarding and child protection.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1990) Article 13 declares that:

‘The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.’

This article, if taken literally, allows children and young people to impart any opinion they wish on the internet. Cyber-bullying can masquerade as freedom of expression. The government Online Harms White Paper (2019) states ‘The impact of harmful content and activity can be particularly damaging for children, and there are growing concerns about the potential impact on their mental health and wellbeing.’ It is almost too easy for a young person to post something offensive online, even though it can be removed quickly when recognised, there is no curb on how many people could have possibly seen it, and once it's been seen it

cannot be unseen. 1 in 5 young people report that they have been cyber-bullied in the USA (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). This shows that cyber-bullying is a worldwide problem. Sexualised online bullying is a rising problem, Project Deshame (2017) found that 80% of the European young people they surveyed, had observed people using terms like 'slut' to describe girls online, and 68% had observed the use of transphobic and homophobic language. This phenomenon could be explained by using Swearer and Hymels (2015) Social-Ecological Diathesis-Stress Model. The model is comparatively similar to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Swearer and Hymel's (2015) model shows how settings such as family, school and local area can influence the child's genetic vulnerabilities. It lays out the theory in a way that the child is a product of its environment and this will dictate the child's involvement in bullying (Ansary, 2020, p.2). This theory is based upon the study of traditional bullying, there are definitely links between traditional and cyber-bullying, but there are very few empirical studies on the cyber-bullying phenomenon and this needs to be addressed to deepen our understanding of the issue and how to tackle it. For example, it has been noted that with traditional bullying, the physical power or stature and social stature are important factors, whereas online they are not. Why are individuals more likely to do and say things on the internet that they would not in real life? Suler's (2004) Online Disinhibition Effect could be used to explain this. Suler outlines two distinct types of inhibition on the internet: benign and toxic. Toxic disinhibition directly relates to cyberbullying, with toxic disinhibition being explained as "blind catharsis, a fruitless repetition compulsion, and an acting out of unsavoury needs without any personal growth at all" (Suler, 2004, p.321). Safeguarding children from cyber-bullying is difficult as without taking away their rights we cannot fully protect them from it. The All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008) outlines protocol for the sharing of indecent images online of children but does not include specific information for non-sexual cyber-bullying.

Another issue that has been made more publicised due to societies fascination with 'celebrity' is an individual's digital footprint. A digital footprint could be described as a catalogue of all you have done on the internet. It includes social media posts, games played, even voice commands. That footprint is accessible forever unless you have deleted something correctly (Childline, 2021). If you have posted insulting or racist remarks for example a future employer could see the post and the individual could lose employment. It may be a hard concept for children to understand, something they do as a child which may seem a joke at the time, could affect their future employment. A recent example of this was when actress, Shila Iqbal, was fired from an acting role for historical offensive posts that she made on social media aged 19 (BBC, 2019). When individuals are in the public eye, they have certain presumed responsibilities to act with integrity and honour as they are open to scrutiny. Unfortunately, many children do not have the foresight to appreciate their actions possible impact on their future. It is important that children learn the effects of this to safeguard against adverse experiences in later life.

During lockdown, children have been using technology more. It has been unavoidable and has been a useful tool in keeping them in touch with their friends, teachers', and family. UNICEF (2020) has raised some action points to safeguard children during increased use online due to the pandemic; governments need to ensure the smooth running and easy access of social services and educating workers within the service on the increased risks online; Social networking platforms need to increase their safeguarding procedures and innovate new ways to ensure the protection of children online and make users aware of the help they can receive if they are harmed while using their services; Schools need to update their safeguarding policies to reflect the change from classroom to online learning ; Parents need to have open conversations with their children about internet matters and ensure that they have access to antivirus software and to know the correct channels for reporting safeguarding issues. This illustrates the complexity of the issues that surround safeguarding children online as it is not a task for one sector alone. All stakeholders need to work collaboratively to protect children and educating children about the dangers gives them some responsibility for their own safeguarding. Social media platforms need to make it easier to access user information when something goes wrong. Security measures need to be more stringent when age restrictions apply, there needs to be an evidence-based approach in allowing people to register profiles, to ensure they are who they say they are. Software needs to be developed which doesn't allow indecent images to be shared on phones belonging to children, this will ensure that the child is protected. The internet is a wonderful tool, it has changed the way we look at the world and made it a much smaller place, if used correctly it can enrich children and young people's experiences and education. Safeguarding needs to be at the forefront of all we do and educating children, parents and social media platforms on the associated risks is paramount. Children and young people need to have good relationships with the adults around them for safeguarding to happen online.

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