👑 GOV.UK

1. Home (https://www.gov.uk/)
2. Crime, justice and law (https://www.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-law)
3. Coronavirus (COVID-19): keeping children safe online (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online)

Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/education-and-childcare)

- Department for
  Digital, Culture,
  Media & Sport (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport)
- Department
  for Education (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)
- Home Office (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office)

Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for parents and carers to keep children safe online

Updated 22 February 2021

Contents

Keep your child safe online
What harms might my child experience online?
Child sexual abuse
Criminal exploitation and county lines, violence and gangs
Radicalising content
'Sexting' (youth-produced sexual imagery)
Cyberbullying
Age-inappropriate content and parental controls
Apps to help children stay safe online
Mental health
Support for children

Print this page

OGL

While there are huge benefits to being online to stay connected to family and friends during this period, the government recognises many parents feel concerned about the activities and content their children are accessing. This guidance outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to get support and advice.

Keep your child safe online

It is important to have regular conversations about staying safe online and to encourage children to speak to you if they come across something worrying online.

Talk to your child about the importance of creating a safe online environment, including keeping any log-in details and passwords safe.

These resources will support you to talk to your child about a range of online safety issues, set up home filtering in a child-friendly way and set up age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices:

- Thinkuknow (https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) by the National Crime Agency - Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (NCA-CEOP) - resources for parents and carers and children of all ages to help keep children safe online
- Childnet (https://www.childnet.com/) has developed guidance for parents and carers (https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation) to begin a conversation about online safety, as well as guidance on keeping under-fives safe online (https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/keeping-young-children-safe-online)
- Parent Info (https://parentinfo.org/) is a collaboration between Parent Zone and NCA-CEOP - support and guidance for parents and carers related to the digital world from leading experts and organisations
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) - guidance for parents and carers (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety) to help keep children safe online
- UK Safer Internet Centre (https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers) - tips and advice for parents and carers to keep children safe online - you can also report any harmful content found online through the UK Safer Internet Centre (https://reportharmfulcontent.com/)
- Inclusive Digital Safety Hub (https://www.internetmatters.org/inclusive-digital-safety/) and Online Safety Hub (https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/), created by South West Grid for Learning in partnership with Internet Matters - support and tailored advice for young people with additional learning needs and their parents or carers
- Parents' Guide to Age Ratings (https://indd.adobe.com/view/edb6c04a-b984-4cd4-ab93-79ea28ac8298) explains how the British Board of Film Classification rates content, and gives parents advice on choosing online content well

What harms might my child experience online?

You may have concerns about specific harms which children can experience online. There are more resources to help you understand and protect your child from these, including:

- child sexual abuse – a definition (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf#page=107)

- child criminal exploitation – a definition
  (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-
  violence-strategy.pdf#page=46)
- exposure to radicalising content
- youth-produced sexual imagery ('sexting')
- cyberbullying
- exposure to age-inappropriate content, such as pornography
- exposure to harmful content, such as suicide content

Child sexual abuse

> If you are concerned call 999 or report it to the NCA-CEOP (https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/).

If your child has been a victim of child sexual abuse – online or offline – and you believe they are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. The police will continue to respond to emergency calls.

If you are concerned that your child has been a victim of online sexual abuse or you are worried about the way someone has been communicating with your child online, you can report it to NCA-CEOP (https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/).

These resources provide information and support for parents and carers on what to do if you're worried about child sexual abuse:

- you can contact the NSPCC helpline (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/) (0808 800 5000) for support and advice if you have concerns about your own or another child's safety. The Together, we can tackle child abuse campaign (https://tacklechildabuse.campaign.gov.uk/) also provides information on the signs of child abuse and neglect
- Thinkuknow (https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/) by NCA-CEOP has developed activities to support your child's safe use of the internet
- the Lucy Faithfull Foundation's Parents Protect (https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/) website has advice on how to help protect children from child sexual abuse including a Harmful Sexual Behaviour Prevention Toolkit (https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/wp-
  content/uploads/2020/10/Stop_It_Now_harmful_sexual_behaviour_prevention_toolkit_Oct_2020.pdf)
- if you see sexual images or videos of someone under 18 online, report it anonymously to the Internet Watch Foundation (https://report.iwf.org.uk/en) who can work to remove them from the web and help to identify victims and survivors
- you can contact Stop It Now! (https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/) for information and advice if you have concerns about someone's behaviour, including children who may be displaying concerning sexual behaviour
- you can contact The Marie Collins Foundation help@mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk for support, including advice and individual counselling, for your child if they have been subjected to online sexual abuse - support is also offered to parents and carers

Criminal exploitation and county lines, violence and gangs

Our page of advice to parents and carers on keeping children safe from abuse and harm (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-from-abuse-and-harm/advice-to-parents-and-carers-on-keeping-children-safe-from-abuse-and-harm#crime-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines-violence-and-gangs) has information on this.

Radicalising content

If you are concerned that any family member, friend or loved one is being radicalised, you can call the police or 101 to get advice or make a Prevent referral, so that they can get safeguarding support.

Support is tailored to the individual and works in a similar way to safeguarding processes designed to protect people from gangs, drug abuse, and physical and sexual exploitation.

Receiving support through Prevent is voluntary, confidential and not a form of criminal sanction.

If you need more help, you can also contact your local authority safeguarding team.

- Educate Against Hate Parents' Hub (https://educateagainsthate.com/parents/) - resources and government advice for parents and carers on keeping young people safe from extremism, including online
- Let's Talk About It (https://www.ltai.info/staying-safe-online/) - support for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
- any member of the public can report terrorist content they find online through the GOV.UK referral tool (https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism) - more information about what to report and what happens when you do can be found on the Action Counters Terrorism campaign (https://act.campaign.gov.uk/)

'Sexting' (youth-produced sexual imagery)

If you are worried about your child sending nude images or videos (sometimes referred to as 'youth-produced sexual imagery' or sexting), NSPCC (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/sexting-sending-nudes/) provides advice to help you understand the risks and support your child.

If your child has shared nude images, Thinkuknow (https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) by NCA-CEOP provides advice on talking to your child and where to get help.

So You Got Naked Online (https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/so-you-got-naked-online/) created by South West Grid for Learning, has advice for young people and parents affected by sexting, also available in a SEND (Special Educational Need and Disability) version (https://www.internetmatters.org/inclusive-digital-safety/so-you-got-naked-online-guide-for-young-people/).

Cyberbullying

If you are concerned about cyberbullying, you can find government advice and information about how you can protect your child (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying) and tackle it if it happens.

Age-inappropriate content and parental controls

If you have downloaded new apps or bought new technology to help stay connected at this time, remember to review and adjust privacy and safety settings if you or your child is signing up to a new online service.

- Internet Matters has step-by-step guides (https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/) on how to set up parental controls so that you can control what content your child can access online

- the UK Safer Internet Centre (https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parental-controls-offered-your-home-internet-provider) has guidance on how to switch on family-friendly filters to prevent age-inappropriate content being accessed on devices in your home
- the NSPCC (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/inappropriate-explicit-content/) has more information for parents or carers with concerns about their child seeking inappropriate or explicit content online

Apps to help children stay safe online

The BBC has a website and app called Own It (https://www.bbc.com/ownit). The website helps children navigate their online lives, and the free smartphone app comes with a special keyboard which can intervene with help and support in the moments that children need it the most. It can be downloaded for free in the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

SafeToNet (https://safetonet.com/foundation/covid/) is an app for parents to help them protect their children from online risks like cyberbullying and sexting, while respecting their child's rights to privacy. The SafeToNet Foundation is providing UK families with free-for-life access to SafeToNet during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Mental health

If you are worried about your child's mental health, the government has published guidance for parents and carers (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak) on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak.

If you are worried that someone you know is suicidal, including your child, Samaritans provides advice on how you can support others (https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/supporting-someone-suicidal-thoughts/).

Support for children

If your child is worried or needs support, they can get advice and support from Childline (https://www.childline.org.uk/) (0800 1111) or download the 'For Me' app.

If you need help to support your child's mental wellbeing, this list of online education resources for home education (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education#mental-wellbeing) includes mental wellbeing resources on how to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

Print this page