



Dear Parents/ Carers,

Digital Safeguarding is an important part of our work to keep children and young people safe across Bedfordshire.

As Christmas draws near, many children may be looking forward to receiving new electronic devices or games, so we feel that this is an appropriate time to highlight some simple online safety tips to help parents/ carers make safer choices and support their children online.

### **Talk to your children:**

Take an active interest in your child's online life and engage in the digital world with them.

- Let your children teach you about their online world and how they use technology; playing new games and exploring websites together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online.
- Make sure your children know that you are safe and approachable; remind them that they can tell you if something happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable, without being told off or punished.

You can find more advice about talking to you child about online safety from CEOP:

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/having-a-conversation-with-your-child/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/having-a-conversation-with-your-child/)

### **Setting boundaries:**

Much like the 'real world', parents need to set boundaries for children online; this provides them with a clear understanding of the limits, expectations and consequences of their behaviour.

- Agree as a family, how the internet and technology will be used in your home; encourage children to use the online safety messages they learn in school and adapt these into your own family rules.
- Discuss online boundaries too; if your child loves to socialise online, talk to them about what is and isn't appropriate to share with their friends online.
- Remember to role-model positive behaviour online; consider asking your child's permission before posting photos of them on social media this Christmas and empower them to have control over their 'digital reputation'.

Take a look at the family agreement template available from Childnet International for some ideas:

[www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation](http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation)

## **Make informed choices:**

It is vital that we fully understand the capabilities and make informed decisions about new games, apps and devices, before giving them to children as a gift.

- Do your research; ask the shop about pre-installed apps or tools and check whether the device or game has an online component, which allows them to connect with others online.
- Always check the PEGI age rating and descriptors on games before buying them for your child and carefully consider whether the content is appropriate for them.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy, safety and security tools on new devices; ensure you are in a position to teach your child how to make their accounts private and how to block and report other people online.

Use the parent guides and shopper's checklists from UK Safer Internet Centre to help you ask the right questions and make informed choices when buying new technology this Christmas:

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology)

## **Filters and Parental Controls:**

Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to illegal, unwanted or unpleasant content online, but there are some simple steps you can take at home to help minimise this risk.

- Make sure you install anti-virus software, filters and parental controls on your child's device before giving it to them.
- Ensure that you are role-modelling good behaviour by using strong passwords yourself; make them difficult to guess and don't share them with your children.
- Remember that blocks and filters are not 100% effective and you can't rely on them alone to protect your children, so remind them to tell you if they see something upsetting online.

Take a look at the interactive guide to parental controls available from Internet Matters:

[www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/interactive-guide/](http://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/interactive-guide/)

## **Other useful websites for parents/carers:**

- [www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)- NSPCC guide to the most popular apps and websites available online.
- [www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware)- NSPCC advice for parents to teach children about online sharing.
- [www.parentport.org.uk](http://www.parentport.org.uk)- Report inappropriate content online.
- [www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)- Free up-to-date security and technical advice.

Remember if you have any concerns then you can contact us on 101

We wish you and your family a safe and happy festive period.

Kind Regards

Bedfordshire Police School liaison team