CyberSafe - Child Online Safety

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Message sent by

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Dorset Police as part of its CyberSafe campaign is encouraging parents – or relatives, teachers and other adults responsible for safeguarding children, to ensure they stay safe online.

When computers first came in to our homes their use was easier to monitor as they were static and often kept in an open area of the home.

Now, of course, in the age of smartphones and tablets – effectively mini-computers that can be used anywhere – adults can find it a real challenge to not only educate children in doing the right thing, but monitor and control their online behaviour.

None of us – of whatever age – is immune from encountering problems online. Our children are certainly more vulnerable and naturally more trusting than adults. Some of these potential issues are as follows:

- Inappropriate contact: From people, who may wish to abuse, exploit or bully them.
- Inappropriate conduct: because of their own and others' online behaviour, such as the personal information they make public, for example on social networking sites. Unfortunately, children can also become cyberbullies, especially when encouraged by others.
- Inappropriate content: being able to access or being sexually explicit, racist, violent, extremist or other harmful material, either through choice or in error.

Here is a simple checklist from the Dorset Safe Schools and Communities Team to help you keep your children safe online.

1. **Talk, talk, talk**. The most important thing for parents and carers is to have lots of conversations with their children and young people about what they are using, how these website/apps work, why they enjoy them, who else is using them etc. In this way they may be able to identify any risky *content*, inappropriate *contact* or *conduct* at an early stage.

2. **Allow access to the internet from devices within the family space**. We do not recommend children and young people having computers or games consoles etc in their rooms.
3. **Check virus protection**. Ensure that mobile devices and laptops have the relevant software to protect from viruses and other malware. There are several free brands that update regularly and provide good protection or there is other commercially available software.
4. **Subscribe to their Internet Service Provider's family filtering service**. All major providers now have this service free of charge – the account holder simply goes to their account online and ticks the relevant boxes. This will prevent different types of content from being available via the router in a particular location. Note this does not have any effect on devices that are not accessing the internet via the router eg 3G/4G phone signal.
5. **Use Safe Searching**. Most search engines such as Google and YouTube have a safe search facility under the settings menu. Parents and carers of young children particularly may wish to use this to stop them coming across inappropriate material.
6. **Tighten privacy settings on websites and apps**. Parents and carers should try to ensure that any social media accounts or apps are set to the highest privacy settings to prevent unknown or inappropriate people from viewing or contacting children and young people – this can be found under Settings in most websites/apps. Often the default setting for these types of account is public meaning that everyone can see content including pictures and videos.
7. **Consider using Parental Controls on devices**. Parents and carers may wish to use Parental controls on laptops, mobile devices or games consoles. These controls can limit the times the device can be used, whether apps/games can be downloaded and whether the internet can be accessed. iPads, Windows and new Android (4.3 or higher operating system) have built in parental controls: for older Android devices, apps may need to be downloaded to provide parental controls.

More advice can be found on the Dorset Police CyberSafe website. cybersafe.dorset.police.uk - Please log on for further advice and details.

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