HEADSTART KERNOW

Your Child Online 16-18 yrs

Using this Guide

The Guide is a practical way to help you have conversations with your child about what they get up to online, and whether to be concerned about anything they're doing.

We list online behaviours in different age categories, and divide them into 'Ok', 'Find Out More' and 'Cause for Concern'. The majority of behaviours online will fall into the 'OK' section. However, there might be things your child talks about that might cause you to worry. This guide will help you decide whether you need to find out more about something they mention, or whether it is definitely something that is concerning and needs some form of intervention.

Below are explanations of the 'OK', 'Find Out More' and 'Cause for Concern' categories, followed by the guide and information on how to respond to an identified behaviour.

'OK'

These behaviours are normal and can be considered low risk for your child and people around them. As they grow older they will be more private about their online activities, they may increasingly use technology to organise their social lives. Children may interact with adults through appropriate forums, such as online games, but will mainly interact with peers. For older teenagers some behaviours in this category may conflict with parents' or professionals' values but reflect normal adult behaviours.

'Find Out More'

These behaviours may indicate a risk of harm to your child or someone else. What is most important about these behaviours is that you need to have a conversation with your child to find out more. Once you have found out more you should be able to identify whether or not the behaviour is a cause for concern and what you might do about it.

'Cause for Concern'

These behaviours are inappropriate for your child's age and represent a high risk of harm. Your child may be doing them compulsively and may experience withdrawal symptoms if the behaviour is stopped or curtailed. They may be a victim of intimidating or humiliating treatment online or may be the perpetrator of this, which could include bribery, trickery or threat of violence. They are likely to be highly secretive about their online activities. If you identify a behaviour that is Cause for Concern you will need to act immediately and offer follow up support (see below for suggestions on this).

What to do when you have identified a behaviour

If, after having a conversation with your child, you have cause for concern it is best to talk to your child's school or college in the first instance. The school or college will have safeguarding leads who are trained to deal with these issues and will know whether the concern is something that just affects your child or is something more widespread within the school. They will know whether to involve other agencies, such as social work or police, and will hold the interests of your child central to any decisions made.

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The behaviours listed in this guide are general guidance and children with special education needs may have specific challenges. More information on inclusive online safety can be found here:

https://www.internetmatters.org/inclusive-digital-safety/

Other resources that provide information to parents about children's online behaviours in general:

https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers

https://www.internetmatters.org/

Age	OK	Find Out More	Cause for Concern
16-18 y/o	Writing a blog	Online gambling	Disrupted sleep through device dependence/gaming
	Research for school/college	Use of digital devices after bedtime	Accessing pro-self-harm/suicide sites
	Looking at images of different body types/genital types to understand range of normal	Obsession with selfies	Accessing extremist/pro-self-harm/suicide social media accounts as part of ongoing recovery or offering support
	Finding out about sexual behaviours using pornography	Excessive posing in selfies	Placing them self at physical risk in order to take selfies or generate online content
	Private use of digital platforms	Requesting images to be airbrushed	Coercive behaviour toward others using digital technology (for example tracking others, accessing other people's accounts)
	Setting up a fake social media account to explore gender identity or sexuality	Catfishing/direct messaging someone pretending to be someone else	Retention of indecent images of peers
	Online dating with peers (while taking appropriate precautions such as taking a friend and meeting in public)	Online dating with peers whilst taking appropriate precautions*	Sexual webcamming
			Selling nudes
		Being secretive* about direct messages	Compulsive* use of pornography
			Accessing extreme pornography
	Meeting online friends if have skyped/facetimed (whilst taking appropriate precautions*)	Meeting online friends unsupervised	Radicalisation (this could be through specific extremist sites or through seemingly innocent forums such as those attached to games)
		Taking and sending/receiving nudes/sexting for any reason	Accessing extremist websites
			Forwarding nudes of other young people, including to friends, without consent
	Online shopping with own money	Online dating with adults	Persistently viewing extremist sites
		Accessing deep web* sites using browsers such as Tor to explore what is there	Accessing dark web* to engage with services (for example buying drugs online, downloading extreme pornography)
			Accessing illegal content
			Showing someone distressing videos they don't want to see
			Online shopping with parents/carers' money without their knowledge

For further info on * items and a glossary of terms, refer to **headstartkernow.org.uk/parents--carers/**

Notes and Glossary

Compulsive behaviour - this is behaviour that is getting in the way of the young person doing what might normally be expected of them, for example if they stop seeing friends, doing school work etc. This is different from excessive behaviour which may still happen very frequently but not to the point it is interfering with normal activities.

Being secretive - Being secretive is different to expecting some level of privacy. Sometimes young people might not want to show parents or carers everything they are doing online. Respected levels of privacy with young people can depend on age and the young person's maturity. This is something that can be discussed in the home. However, if this goes beyond a normal expectation of privacy, for example if they become agitated about someone seeing messages. This could be a sign that they are being bullied, groomed or exploited online.

Regular social media use - While "regular" is a term that will depend on age and maturity, and social media can be used positively by young people, its use can become distracting and even compulsive. For the 9-12 age group regular might mean checking a couple of times a day. More than that might be a problem and it is important to discuss in the home what would be acceptable.

Appropriate precautions (for meeting online friends) - Young people will often make friends online and this will generally be a regular part of online life. However, it is important to note that some people will not be honest about who they are online and meeting online friends for the first time should not be undertaken without precautions such as bringing along a friend, meeting in a public place, making sure there has been video contact before meeting in person or being able to contact someone easily if things become difficult.

Coercion – using threats or bribery to try to force someone to do something they would otherwise not want to do. Threats could be subtle and seem normal within a relationship or group of friends. There will often be an element of fear, meaning that the coerced individual may concede in an attempt to get the coercion/contact to end.

Cyberbullying – online bullying, which is now frequently, and unfortunately, used to describe any kind of online abuse. Its inaccurate use allows us to both overreact to what we might refer to as brief online fallouts, and devalue the impact of different types of abuse, for example harassment. Bullying requires some level of threat (either physical or emotional) and also requires persistent abuse.

Deep Web/Dark Web - Deep web is simply parts of the WOrld Wide Web that are "hidden" from search engines and monitoring and has to be accessed by special software such as a Tor browser. There are many reasonable uses of the deep web, for example to avoid excessive surveillance. However, the Dark Web is specific parts of the deep web where illegal activity takes place. This may be the exchange of child sex abuse images, images of bestiality and illegal forms of pornography. It may also include the planning of criminal activity such as drug dealing or terrorism.

Digital age of consent – the age in law where is has been decided a child is capable of giving consent to have their data collected online. As part of the GDPR, this age has been defined in the UK as 13. The digital age of consent is frequently used to argue why younger children should not be using online services and how it is illegal for them to do so. This is not the case, and the law has not been established for any safeguarding reasons.

Influencer – someone on social media who makes recommendations for purchasing of products or services in exchange for payment. Influencers are generally individuals (or 'virtual individuals') with large online followings (therefore being valuable that they make recommendations) and generate considerable income. "Becoming an influencer" is attractive to young people as a result. However, in order to develop a large following the individual needs to potentially expose themselves to risky online behaviours that young children might not appreciate.

Online grooming – making use of digital technology, such as social media or private messaging to trick, force or pressure a young person into engaging in sexual activity, for example sending an indecent image or live webcamming. Grooming can take place between peers as a well as an adult grooming a child. Young people may also be groomed using many of the same techniques into gangs or radicalised thinking.

Online peer on peer abuse – Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of abuse that happens between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate). Online peer-on-peer abuse is any form of peer-on- peer abuse with a digital element, for example, sexting, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, peer-on-peer grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, distribution of sexualised content and harassment.

Over sharing – the excessive, and often non-consensual, sharing of images and videos of their child(ren) online by parents without sufficient consideration of the impact of this on the child.

Pornography – is defined in the digital economy act 2017 as any image, video, work classified as 'R18' - a special and legally restricted classification primarily for explicit works of consenting sex or strong fetish material involving adults.

Revenge Porn – the non-consensual sharing of an indecent image or video with others. It is important to take the legal distinction that one can only be a victim of revenge pornography if one is an adult, because it is not illegal for someone aged 18 and above to be the subject of a sexually explicit image.

Sexting – the popular term for the exchange of indecent images using online or mobile devices (and sometimes used to describe sexualised messages). While the exchange of images such as this among young people is technically illegal, the legislation is complex and simple messages like "don't do it, it's illegal" mean that young people coerced or abused as a result of engaging in these activities are unlikely to ask for help. Young people are unlikely to apply the term 'sexting' to their behaviour, but may use terms such as 'nudes', 'dick pic', 'tit pic' etc.

Trolling – deliberately starting an argument or upsetting people online for one's own amusement. Saying something controversial online to upset others.