

# SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

## STRATEGY GUIDE

### Theme: Online Activity

#### Introduction

Today's children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. It is important that young people are equipped with the knowledge needed to make the best use of the internet and technology in a safe, considered and respectful way, so they are able to reap the benefits of the online world.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) makes reference to multi-agency professional safeguarding of young people from online abuse.



## What is the impact on safeguarding adolescents?

The online world develops and changes at great speed. This can make it difficult for multi-agency professionals working with young people to stay up to date with the latest devices, platforms, apps, trends, and related threats. It is therefore important to focus on the underpinning knowledge and behaviours that can help young people to navigate the online world safely and confidently regardless of the device, platform or app. This should include:

- How young people should evaluate what they see online. This will enable them to make judgements about what they see online and not automatically assume that what they see is true, valid or acceptable.
  - Is this website/URL/email fake? How can I tell?
  - What does this cookie do and what information am I sharing?
  - Is this person who they say they are?
  - Why does someone want me to see this?
  - Why does someone want me to send this?
  - Why would someone want me to believe this?
  - Why does this person want my personal information?
  - What is behind this post?
  - Is this too good to be true?
  - Is this fact or opinion?
- How to recognise techniques used for persuasion. This will enable young people to recognise the techniques that are often used to persuade or manipulate others and understand that a strong grasp of knowledge across many areas makes people less vulnerable to these techniques and better equipped to recognise and respond appropriately to strongly biased content or malicious activity.

Professionals can help young people to recognise:

- Online content which tries to make people believe that something false is true and/or to mislead (misinformation and disinformation).
- Techniques that companies use to persuade people to buy something.
- Ways in which games and social media companies try to keep users online longer (persuasive/sticky design).
- Criminal activities such as grooming.
- Online behaviour – this will enable young people to understand what acceptable and unacceptable online behaviour looks like. Professionals should support young people in understanding that the same standard of behaviour and honesty apply on and offline, including the importance of respect for others. Young people should also be able to recognise unacceptable behaviour in others, looking at why people behave differently online, for example, how anonymity (you do not know me) and invisibility (you cannot see me) affect what people do.
- How online emotions can be intensified resulting in mob mentality.

- Unacceptable online behaviours often passed off as so-called social norms or just banter. For example, negative language that can be used, and in some cases is often expected, as part of online gaming and the acceptance of misogynistic, homophobic and racist language that would never be tolerated offline.
- Online risks – this will enable young people to identify possible online risks and make informed decisions about how to act.
- The ways in which someone may put themselves at risk online.
- The risks posed by another person’s online behaviour.
- When risk taking can be positive and negative.
- ‘Online reputation’ and the positive and negative aspects of an online digital footprint.
- The risks versus the benefits of sharing information online and how to make a judgement about when and how to share and who to share with.
- Implications, such as what might happen if I post something online? Who will see it? Who might they send it to?
- How and when to seek support – this will enable young people to understand safe ways in which to seek support if they are concerned or upset by something they have seen online.

Professionals can help young people identify:

- Who trusted adults are.
- The different ways to access support from school, police, the [National Crime Agency’s Click CEOP button](#) (reporting service for children and young people) and third sector organisations such as [Childline](#) and [Internet Watch Foundation](#).



### Additional Resources and Information

The information below signposts multi-agency practitioners to websites that can develop understanding about what online applications young people are using as well as equipping professionals to have conversations with young people about what activities they are carrying out online so that support can be provided when required:

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) - Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.

[Inspecting Safeguarding in Early years, Education and Skills Settings](#) - This guidance sets out the main points that inspectors need to consider when inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings.

[Ofsted Handbook for Children Centre Inspections](#) - This handbook provides instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 from April 2013. It sets out what inspectors must do and what children's centres, local authorities and their partners can expect and provides guidance for inspectors on making their judgements.

[Online Harms White Paper](#) - Published April 2019.

[Education for a Connected World](#) - A framework to equip children and young people for digital life.

[Evolve Resources for Education for a Connected World](#) - Shaping a better online life for all.

[Education Policy Institute: Social Media and Children's Mental Health](#) - A 2017 review of the evidence.

[Facebook Checklist](#) - Leaflet on Facebook privacy.

[Instagram Checklist](#) - The checklist holds information on Instagram privacy.

[Snapchat Checklist](#) - The checklist holds information on Snapchat privacy.

[UK Safer Internet Centre Safety](#) - An overview of safety tools on social networks and other online services.

[BOOST](#) - Online safety toolkit for schools.

[UK Safer Internet Centre, Power of Image \(2017\)](#) - A report into the role and influence of images and videos in young people's digital lives.

[SWGfL Policy and Practice in UK Schools \(Jan 2017\)](#) - Data compliance in schools.

[Children's Commissioner, Grow up Digital \(Jan 2017\)](#) - A report from the Children's Commissioner's Growing Up Digital Taskforce.

[ThinkUKnow](#) - Resources for professionals to deliver education and raise awareness of online child abuse and exploitation.

[Childnet Resources](#) - Provides resources and information for professionals.

[NSPCC Resources](#) - Resources and information for professionals.

[Internet Matters Resources](#) - Information, advice and support to keep children safe online.

## References

This guidance has been adapted from the following document:

DfE 2019, [Teaching Online Safety In School](#). Accessed 22 November 2021.