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ICT SAFE USAGE		

Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all these risks turn into actual problems and if young people never face any risks, they will never learn how to deal with them. By helping young people understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

Why children use social media

Self-esteem
Expression
Confidence
Popularity
Belonging
Entertainment

Understand the risks children may need to deal with

What they could see or do:

- Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual, and pornographic content
- Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
- Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia, and suicide
- Over-sharing of personal information
- Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

Who they might meet

- People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
- People posing behind fake profiles for: mischief-making, sexual grooming and stalking, blackmail and extortion, Identity theft and hacking

How this could affect them

- Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
- Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
- Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
- Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
- Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to

- handle
- Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future
- Understand the risks children may need to deal with
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- pornographic content
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- involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

Practical tips to help minimise the risks Young People might face

It is good practice for apps and websites to have safety advice and well-designed safety features which can make a real difference to how safe children will be when using them.

Work through safety and privacy features on the apps that children are using or might use. Make sure they understand the point of these and how to use them.

Do not be put off by believing the young person knows more than you: the tools are, quite easy to manage.

- Ask them to show you which social media apps they use and what they like about them. Talk about how they use them and what makes them so engaging.
- Explain how you can use privacy settings to make sure only approved friends can see posts & images.
- Check if any of their apps have 'geo-location' enabled, sharing their location unintentionally.
- Show them how to report offensive comments or block people who check 'tagging' settings so that when others are posting or sharing photos online, the child's identity is not revealed. Also, get people's consent before sharing photos.
- Encourage your child to come and talk to you if they see anything that upsets them.

Keep talking and stay involved

In a mobile age, children can't be completely protected, even by the best privacy controls; another child may use different settings. So it's important to keep talking to your child about the implications of social media. Getting a sense of what they think is a useful place to start, you may be surprised by how much thought they may have given to the issues.

Encourage your children to think carefully about the way they, and others behave online, and how they might deal with difficult situations. Here are pointers for discussion:

- People may not always be who they say they are online: how can this create problems?
- Why is it unwise to meet anyone in the real world that you've only ever met online?
- Even if you think your messages are private, remember that words and images can always be captured and broadcast.
- People present themselves differently online - do they really look like that?
- Are they always having that good a time?
- Be aware that screens, and especially being anonymous, can lead people to say things they would not say to someone's face.
- What does being a good friend and a likeable person online look like?
- There can be pressure to be part of a particular group online or to be seen to be following a certain set of ideas. How can you take a step back and make your own decisions?

For more information

You can find out more about how young people use social media, the apps they use, the risks they face, how to use privacy settings, and advice and tips about how to talk children and young people at:

- www.childnet.com/sns
- www.internetmatters.org
- www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety
- www.parentzone.org.uk
- www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/parents
- <http://www.iwf.org.uk/>
- www.askaboutgames.com

