Online safety for parents and carers
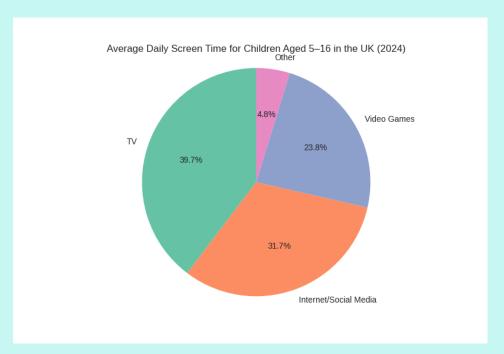
Empowering families in the digital age

Why online safety matters

- Children are online more than ever, for learning, socialising, and entertainment.
- Technology is powerful, but it comes with risks.
- Parents are key to building safe, confident digital users.

Online safety isn't just about blocking harmful content it's about teaching children how to think critically, behave responsibly, and know when to ask for help.

Average Daily Screen Time for Children Aged 5–16 in the UK (2024)

Other 4.8%

Video Games 23.8%

TV 39.7%

Internet/Social Media 31.7%

Here's a pie chart showing the average daily screen time for children aged 5–16 in the UK in 2024.
It breaks down how children typically spend their 6.3 hours of screen time each day.
📊 Breakdown of Daily Screen Time (2024):
- TV: 2.5 hours (40%)
- Internet/Social Media: 2 hours (32%)
- Video Games: 1.5 hours (24%)
- Other (homework, creative apps): 0.3 hours (5%)

Positives of technology

Access to education and learning tools

Staying connected with friends and family

Creativity through apps, games and media

Opportunities for self expression and hobbies

Allows us to access material when and wherever we like

What we teach the children.

- Don't post any personal information online such as your address, email address to mobile number.

- Remember not everyone is who they say they are

- Think carefully about what you say before you post something

- Respect other people's views, even if you don't agree with someone else's views doesn't give you the right to be rude.

- Don't meet up with people you've met online. Speak to a trusted adult about people if they suggest that you do.

- Don't befriend people you don't know.

- Never give you your password

- Keep your privacy settings as high as possible

- Thank carefully before posting/sending images or videos of yourself and others.

Common online risks

Cyber bullying

Inappropriate content

Online grooming and exploitation

Oversharing information

Addiction to screen time issues

Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?

Under 13
- Roblox
- PopJam
- FaceTime

13+
- Twitter
- Facebook and Messenger
- Viber
- WeChat
- Monkey
- Yubo
- Dubsmash
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Skype
- Google Hangouts
- Reddit
- Snapchat
- Pinterest

16+
- WhatsApp
- Telegram Messenger
- Tumblr

17+
- Line
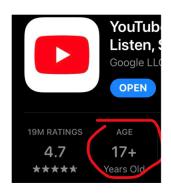- Sarahah
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Sourced from NSPCC website October 2019

YOUTUBE

YouTube has an age rating of 17+ this is due to the content of the videos.

Some videos contain, explicit language, nudity, scenes containing drugs, alcohol, gambling.

Anyone can upload a video, and this is not monitored until it is reported.

National online safety

Please find below a link to the National Online Safety website which is full of detailed information regarding how to keep your child safe online. On here, you will be able to read information about the dangers of gaming addiction and the under-age use of apps.

- National Online Safety Video

- National Online Safety – Gaming

- National Online Safety – General Information

- National Online Safety – App Information

- National Online Safety – What Parents/Carers need to Know

Staying safe on your mobile

Don't reply to any nasty messages you receive. Tell an adult about them

Don't reply to a text from someone you don't know

Keep the messages you have been sent so you can show them to a trusted adult and make a note of the time and date or even screen shot them.

Don't answer calls from withheld numbers or numbers that you do not recognise

Don't give your number to someone you don't know.

Don't send pictures or videos to people you don't know. Always make sure the pictures are appropriate

Misinformation Vs Disinformation

- Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is shared without the intent to deceive. It often spreads when people believe something is true and pass it on without checking the facts—like outdated health advice or misquoted statistics. While it's not meant to cause harm, misinformation can still confuse people and lead to poor decisions, especially online where content travels quickly
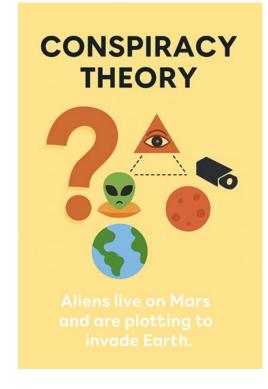
- Disinformation is deliberately false information created and shared with the purpose of misleading others. It's often used to manipulate opinions, stir up fear, or promote conspiracy theories. Disinformation can be especially dangerous when it targets young people, as it may appear convincing or come from sources that seem trustworthy. Teaching children to question what they see online is key to protecting them from these tactics

Both can affect children's beliefs, emotions and safety

Conspiracy theories

- A conspiracy theory is a belief that certain events or situations are secretly controlled by powerful groups, often without solid evidence. These theories can spread quickly online, especially through social media and videos, and may seem convincing because they use dramatic language or claim to reveal "hidden truths." While some people share them out of curiosity, conspiracy theories can be misleading and harmful especially when they promote fear, distrust, or false information. It's important to teach children to question what they see online, check facts, and think critically before believing or sharing content.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

Aliens live on Mars and are plotting to invade Earth.

Practical tips for parents

- Use parental controls and privacy settings

- Set screen time boundaries

- Keep devices in shared spaces

- Know the apps and games your child uses

- Encourage breaks and offline activities

Here are a few popular monitoring apps that many families find helpful:

Qustodio – Offers detailed reports on your child's online activity, screen time limits, and content filtering.

Net Nanny – Known for its real-time alerts and strong web filtering capabilities.

Bark – Monitors texts, emails, and social media for signs of cyberbullying, depression, or risky behaviour.

Google Family Link – A free tool for Android users that helps manage apps, screen time, and device location.

Apple Screen Time – Built into iOS devices, allowing you to set app limits and downtime.

Online Safety Hub- Virgin Media's website offers practical advice on managing screen time, spotting online risks, and setting privacy controls on social media.

Sky Broadband Shield: A free tool that filters content based on age settings (PG, 13, 18) and allows you to block specific websites. It's managed via your Sky account and applies to all devices using your home WiFi

Promoting E-Safety at home

- Model good digital habits

- Share trusted websites and resources

- Teach children to report and block harmful content

- Celebrate the positive use of technology

- Encourage open conversations

Where to get help and support

School Safeguarding Team

NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk

CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk

Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org

Childline: 0800 1111 or https://www.childline.org.uk/

Spot the signs

Changes in online behavior:

- Increased or decreased screen time: A sudden jump in how much time they spend on devices, or a sudden drop, can be a sign.

- Secrecy and hiding: Your child may quickly hide their screen when you approach or become evasive about their online activities.

- New or unfamiliar contacts: They might mention new online friends, contacts, or followers you're unaware of.

Emotional and behavioral shifts:

- Mood changes: Watch for increased anger, upset, anxiety, withdrawal, or sudden, severe mood swings.

- Loss of interest: They might lose interest in activities they once enjoyed or appear stressed when using their device.

- Behavioral problems: Signs can include developing mental health problems, issues with sleeping, or showing a lack of confidence.

Social withdrawal:

- Less time with family: They may disengage from family life and their usual activities.

- Changed friendships: They might suddenly stop spending time with their usual friends or begin to isolate themselves.

Other concerning signs:

- Unexplained gifts or money: Receiving unexpected gifts, new clothes, or having new money can be a sign of grooming or exploitation.

- Changes in school performance: Declining grades or a loss of interest in school can signal underlying problems.

- Introduction of inappropriate content: They might start using adult language or show an unusual understanding of sexual matter

Family online safety checklist

1. **Start with Open Conversations**, talk regularly about what your child does online, apps, games, websites. Ask how they feel about what they see or experience. Create a safe space where they can share concerns without fear of punishment

2. **Know What They're Using**, make a list of all devices your child uses (phones, tablets, consoles, smart TVs)Check which apps and platforms they're active on (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat, Roblox, WhatsApp). Explore these apps yourself to understand how they work

3. **Set Up Parental Controls.** Use built-in parental controls on devices and apps, set age appropriate filters for web browsing and app downloads. Enable privacy settings to limit who can contact or view your child's profile

4. **Create Healthy Boundaries.** Set screen time limits and encourage regular breaks, establish device free zones (e.g., bedrooms, dinner table). Use a family tech agreement to set expectations together.

5. **Teach Critical Thinking.** Help your child spot misinformation and disinformation. Discuss how to verify sources and question dramatic claims, talk about conspiracy theories and why they can be misleading.

6. **Promote Safe Behaviour.** Teach your child not to share personal info (address, school, phone number)Encourage respectful communication and kindness online. Remind them to report and block harmful content or users

If you require any additional information or support then please contact a member of the safeguarding team.

Danielle Doherty
Designated safeguarding lead