

Internet Safety and your family

an introduction to eSafety
for you and your children



London Borough of

Redbridge



Introduction

The internet is an exciting and informative tool for both parents and their children. It helps us keep in touch with relatives who live far away, watch catch-up TV, find lots of useful information, book holidays or even buy the weekly groceries. However, there are risks that parents need to be aware of and know how to manage. This leaflet looks briefly at the new technologies, raises awareness of some of the risks and gives you ideas on how to keep your family safe.

Technology



For many adults, new technologies represent a marked difference from their own life experiences as a child. Waiting for a packet of photographs to come back from the chemists, using telephone boxes to phone home and even wearing wrist-watches, are all experiences that our children and young people may never experience. These days, through mobile phones, laptops and games consoles, the internet is all around us and everything is available 'on-demand'.

While parents and carers can often feel ill-equipped to offer guidance and support in this area, their own experiences of many of life's situations make them absolutely ideal to help their children through these difficult life decisions. Resisting peer pressure, choosing good friendships and understanding who and what to trust have all been part of growing up for centuries. Technology simply provides an alternate environment to learn these lessons, where mistakes can be very public and sometimes even dangerous.

Find out how much you know (or don't know) by checking out Childnet's jargon buster: www.digizen.org/glossary

Cyberbullying

New technologies provide an apparently anonymous method by which bullies can torment their victims at any time of the day or night. While the bullying may not be physical, the victim may receive an email, chat or text messages or be the target of unfavourable websites or social networking profiles that make them feel embarrassed, upset, depressed or afraid. This can damage their self-esteem and pose a threat to their psychological well-being. For more advice on preventing and responding to cyberbullying watch the short video clip called 'Let's Fight it Together' on the website <http://digizen.org/>

Source: 'Know IT All' leaflet produced by Childnet



Social networking

It is now common for young people to have their own 'mini-websites' on social networking sites such as Facebook*.



These systems enable people to set up profiles online and share personal information such as their address, whether they are 'in a relationship' and what they are doing right now! Such status updates, for example "I've just seen the movie everyone was talking about at school today - it's great!" are often only relevant for their immediate friendship groups.

There are many social networking systems that offer different ways of defining who is in your friendship group and who can see the information, photos and videos that you publish. While your own children may be confident using these systems, they may not be so confident working out what is appropriate to share publicly or with their friendship groups or even know who their real friends are. Parents need to talk to their children about the networking systems they use and have an agreement of what information should be kept private (e.g. mobile phone numbers).

*In Redbridge, a 2009 survey showed that Facebook is the most popular social networking service.

What are the risks?

The potential risks for children and the internet/mobile phones include, inappropriate:



Contact: potential contact from someone online who may wish to bully or abuse them.

Conduct: children may be at risk because of their own and others online behaviour, such as the personal information they make public.

Content: inappropriate material is available to children online. Consider using filtering software and agree ground rules about what services you are happy for your children to use.

Commercialism: young people's privacy can be invaded by aggressive advertising and marketing schemes, that can also negatively impact on their self-image.

Find out more about the risks by visiting <http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk>



ZIP IT

keep your personal stuff private and think about what you say and do online



BLOCK IT

Block people who send nasty messages and don't open unknown links and attachments



FLAG IT

Flag up with someone you trust if anything upsets you or if someone asks to meet you offline

Solutions to the problem

Within the home we should think about these issues in three stages:

- 1. Educate yourself:** Children and young people tend to stay up to date on the latest technologies from each other. Parents should stay up to date by talking to their children, talking to each other and using resources designed for this purpose. More info here: www.digizen.org/parents, www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents and www.childnet.com/kia/parents
- 2. Invest in software:** There are technologies that can be used to restrict, monitor or filter the internet feed into your home. Many families choose to invest in such technologies and your local computer shop will be happy to advise you on the best options. It should be noted that these systems are never perfect and if a young person is determined enough, they will discover the software's weaknesses.
- 3. Create a family agreement:** What guidelines can we as a family agree on to keep safe? Families, depending on the age of the children, will need different agreements and it is important these are discussed, understood and agreed by all members of the family. More info here: www.digizen.org/digicentral/family-agreement.aspx

Create a Family Agreement for your family

As a family, discuss and agree what is acceptable internet use for computers, laptops, games consoles and mobile phones. Points you may wish to consider include:

-  Not having the internet switched on after bedtime.
-  Not allowing children to use the internet alone in their bedrooms.
-  Ensuring that mobiles (many of which have internet access) remain in the kitchen or living room as opposed to being kept in children's bedrooms.
-  Get to know your children's favourite websites and learn about their safety features, e.g. help and support and blocking/reporting buttons.
-  Invest in parental control or filtering software for all computers in your household. If you choose to purchase such systems, make sure they are introduced as part of your family policy and make sure you keep yourself up to date with the risks and the systems available to deal with them.
-  Encourage your children to use nicknames or usernames to protect their personal information. Create a family email address that your children can use for creating accounts to avoid junk email in their personal inboxes.

Start a new conversation

One of our aims as parents is to ensure our children are suitably educated about risks to make good decisions when away from the family home and when we are not there. We hope that this leaflet will create new topics of conversation between you and your children, your partner, your friends and your relatives. We hope it will give you more confidence to talk to your children about:

-  Social technologies so that you have a common understanding of how they work and what the risks might be.
-  What is acceptable behaviour both online and with mobile phones.
-  How both of you can manage and report a problem, should one occur.

Discussing the safe use of technologies is the **new parental responsibility of this century**. It has a lot of parallels to teaching your child how to cross the road or learn to swim. Eventually, you want them to be safe when you're not there, but you may need to hold their hand when they are young and keep a caring eye on them as they grow older.

Now is the right time to make sure your family is eSafe



Where to go for more information

With such a wide range of information available, knowing which ones you can trust can be a task in itself. We have provided a list of the main organisations and websites that offer reliable and up to date information and advice, many of which have areas for parents and carers, young people, children and practitioners.

Childnet International:

a non-profit organisation that works to help make the internet a great and safe place for children.



Visit www.digizen.org/parents, www.childnet.com/kia/parents and www.kidsmart.org.uk

Online Police Services

(CEOP): exists to tackle child sex abuse, be a central point for reporting incidents and provide information and advice.



Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Direct Gov: the official UK Government website for citizens.



Visit <http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk>

Families Information

Direct (FiND): one stop information and advice service for families and people who work with families.



Call free on 0800 587 7500, email

find@redbridge.gov.uk

or visit the Family Services Directory at

<http://find.redbridge.gov.uk>