Safeguarding Children and Young People – Online Safety

The online safety of children and young people has been of paramount importance within recent years, due to young people being groomed in relation to abuse such as Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation or Radicalisation.

It is really crucial for everyone to keep this issue high on their agenda when working with children, young people and families.

Children and young people have increasingly relied on the use of online technology, with increased access to electronic devices with connectivity to the internet. At the same time, children's social connectivity, away from the online world, has decreased significantly due to the social restrictions of the pandemic. Whilst online activity has many benefits, such as access to educational resources, it also may pose significant risks.

It is therefore really important that both parents and young people are informed as to what potential risks may be.
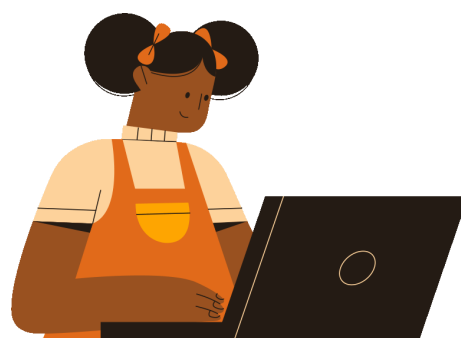
For more information , please visit:
https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-grooming/

Key Findings

The Office for National Statistics published data for children's online behaviour in England and Wales, for the year ending March 2020. Children who are included in this data were aged 10 – 15 years old.

- Almost 9 in 10 children (89%) aged 10 to 15 years said they went online every day.

- While the majority of children told us they only spoke to or exchanged messages with people online who they knew in person, around one in six children (17%) aged 10 to 15 years spoke with someone they had never met before (equivalent to 682,000 children) in the previous 12 months.

- An estimated 1 in 50 children (2%) said that they spoke to or messaged someone online in the previous 12 months who they thought was their age but later found out were much older.

- An estimated 5% of children aged 10 to 15 years met up in person with someone they had only spoken to online (equivalent to 212,000 children) in the previous 12 months.

- Around 1 in 10 children (11%) aged 13 to 15 years reported receiving a sexual message, while 1 in 100 reported sending a sexual message, in the previous 12 months.

- Girls aged 13 to 15 years were significantly more likely to report receiving sexual messages than boys (16% compared with 6%) in the previous 12 months.

- The majority of parents or guardians of children aged 10 to 15 years (64%) had some sort of rules about the length of time and when their children can go online.

Service Six provides the TARGET Project across Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. The project aims to equip young people with an increased awareness of online protective behaviours, increased levels of wellbeing, increased transferable life skills and increased accredited youth volunteering.

During September-October 2019, Service Six conducted a coproduced consultation with over 300 Children and Young People aged 11 - 17 and discussed their online behaviours. The results were as follows:

- 84% perceive to feel safe whilst using social media

- 70% are regularly contacted online by strangers
- 51% responded to stranger contact

- 42% have online fears as they have been contacted by stranger/s and 28% are scared as they saw something online they didn't like

- 31% stated it appeared to be a stranger adult and 38% stated it appeared to be someone their own age who contacted them online
- 29% were asked to meet strangers

- 21% met with strangers

- 38% received rude images/messages via live streaming, followed by 33% via text and 24% via video

- 52% sent images of themselves and 49% thought it is ok to send images of themselves

- 9% have sent pornography

- Only 8% told an adult

Furthermore, 37% of Children and Young People also told Service Six that they need better information on sites and apps in schools and colleges and 34% stated that help and information via online apps or a helpline is needed (eSupport). Social media is an ever-present part of childhood, with 90% of 11 – 16 year olds having a social media account.

Finding Help

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999 or 112. If the child is not in immediate danger but you are still concerned that they might be in danger, or at risk of being in danger, you can report your concerns via the below weblink:
https://lrsb.org.uk/childreport

For general advice and guidance related to online safety issues:

- TARGET Helpline on 07718 003219
  Lines open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm
- Online Ollie App – Go to your App store and download for free
- Internet Matters - providing comprehensive advice and guidelines on management of online use, for all ages
- Safer Internet - an advice resource for parents and carers
- Childnet - offering online support and resources

References

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/childrensonlinebehaviourinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020

www.servicesix.co.uk/online-issues/