







Digital Parenting

This pack has been created for parents, carers, and professionals to help support children and young people who are at risk of online harms.

Middlesbrough's digital model follows strong evidence-based research from a range of sources. We want every child to get the most out of technology, to embrace being online enjoying a happy, resilient and safe digital life where they flourish into excellent digital citizens!

"Our mission is to let children know that they matter"

Middlesbrough MACH

If your child or young person remains vulnerable or at risk, please contact MACH to discuss additional support you may want to consider.

For information/advice or referrals for Middlesbrough residents, you will need to phone **01642 726004** or email **MiddlesbroughMACH@middlesbrough.gov.uk**

If in immediate harm, Phone 999

If you are worried about online sexual abuse, or the way someone has been communicating with a child online. Make a report to www.ceop.police.uk

Children's social care	Office hours contact	Out of hours contact	Email
Middlesbrough	01642 726004	01642 524552	MiddlesbroughMACH@middlesbrough.gov.uk

What's inside?

PAGE

- 4 Digital Resilience
- 5 Online activities vs online risks
- 6 Social media applications
- 7 Online exploitation
- 8 Online grooming
- 9 CEOP Reporting mechanism
- 10 Sexting
- 11 Scams and Phishing
- 12 Cyberbullying
- 13 Conversation starters
- 14 Top tips
- 15 Family online safety plan
- 16 Family acceptable use agreement
- 18 Parental tools and filtering



Digital resilience

What does digital resilience mean?

Just like we teach our children to safely ride a bike or cross the road, we should equip children with the right skills and tools to navigate the internet safely.

Banning or prohibiting online access is not the solution, as this can make children less safe in online spaces (Pybilski, 2014 *Building online resilience in children*), additionally most support services for children are now online, and removing their devices could take away their only means of seeking help or support.

"Digital resilience involves having the ability to understand when you are at risk online, knowing what to do if anything goes wrong, learning from your experiences of being online, and being able to recover from any difficulties or upsets."

(UKCIS, 2018) UK Council for Internet Safety.

UKCIS have put together a helpful **Digital Resilience framework** to help parents and young people understand digital resilience: It's in four key areas: (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Digital Resilience Framework



An individual understands when they are at risk online and can make informed decisions about the digital space they are in





An individual learns from their experiences and is able to adapt their future choices, where possible



An individual knows what to do to seek help from a range of appropriate sources



An individual can recover when things go wrong online by receiving the appropriate level of support to aid recovery



You can read more about Digital Resilience and access their full parental toolkit here.

Digital Resilience Toolkit - https://www.internetmatters.org

Online activities vs Online risks

The internet is a fantastic place for young people to navigate and enjoy, it offers countless benefits including the ability to connect with others, learning and sharing information, promote well-being and developing creativity and even furthering their careers.

Figure 2. (Data extracted from in their own words, Katz and El Asam, 2021)

Below the most popular activities for children aged 11 – 17 years.

	11yrs	12yrs	13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	16yrs	17yrs
Posting my photos	23%	24%	23%	21%	21%	24%	32%
Chatting to friends on social media or in games	62%	70%	75%	76%	79%	81%	74%
Gaming	65%	63%	59%	59%	54%	54%	58%
Learning	26%	19%	17%	16%	24%	30%	26%
Sharing what I'm doing	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	12%	19%
Watching videos, films, TV or livestreaming	69%	73%	75%	79%	75%	77%	66%
Shopping	18%	24%	30%	33%	33%	37%	41%
Listening to music	68%	74%	74%	78%	78%	80%	75%
Browsing & exploring	20%	23%	26%	30%	31%	33%	42%
Watching favourite vloggers	39%	35%	26%	21%	20%	17%	27%
Finding new friends	9%	7%	7%	8%	8%	10%	18%
Watching sport	26%	27%	27%	26%	25%	31%	32%
Visiting gambling sites	196	1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	16%
Looking at pages meant for adults	2%	2%	4%	8%	8%	16%	23%
Talking to people in chatrooms	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	19%
On dating sites	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	4%	18%
Watching news	9%	8%	9%	9%	10%	10%	18%

Young people will generally own smartphone by the age of 11 with over 97% owning one by the age of 12.

(Ofcom, 2023)



- There are many benefits to being online and equally as many risks, the graph below shows the nature of harm in red, with the type of risk in the collumns.
- We can cataegories risk using the 3 Cs].
- Child engages with and/or is exposed to potentially harmful CONTENT;
- Child experiences and/or is targeted by potentially harmful CONTACT;
- Child witnesses, participates in and/or is a victim of potentially harmful CONDUCT;
- Child is party to and/or exploited by a potentially harmful CONTRACT.

Figure 3. Types of Online risks children and young face (CORE, 2023)

C O R E	Content Child as recipient	Contact Child as participant	Conduct Child as actor	Contract Child as consumer	
Aggressive	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful and extreme content	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, gambling, blackmail, security risks	
Sexual	Pornography (legal and illegal), sexualisation of culture, body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messages, sexual pressures	Sextortion, trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming child sexual abuse	
Values	Age-inappropriate user-generated or marketing content, mis/disinformation	Ideological persuasion radicalisation and extremist recruitment	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, peer pressures	Information filtering, profile bias, polarisation, persuasive design	
Cross-cutting	Privacy and data protection abuses, physical and mental health risks, forms of discrimination				

Social media applications

Social media apps can be thoroughly enjoyable, whether it's the hours of fun you can have getting a selfie in the latest lenses or uploading your newest clothing item on Instagram being online means validation for a lot of young people. Their dynamics of relationships online can be very different to that in the real world with oftentimes the two worlds merging.



Many parents may wonder which apps should they be worried about, but the truth is, if the application allows children to communicate with people then they can be misused by offenders to chat to children. Parents should set some healthy habits with their young people which they can put within a family online safety plan or sometimes called a family use agreement.





This below links to a guide, that highlights the most common apps, including risky ones that can expose children to harmful content, reveal personal information or share location data, and provides advice on apps that can improve children's learning and well-being for a better online experience.



For regularly updated popular apps please use the link below www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/

Online exploitation

What does Online exploitation mean?

Online exploitation is when someone uses their power over another to coerce, manipulate intimidate or threaten a young person to do sexual or criminal acts either online using social media applications or offline after speaking online.



Young people can be at risk of online exploitation for several reasons such as oversharing their personal lives online, have vulnerabilities themselves, sharing images, adding people they don't know, not understanding what exploitation is and not having a strong support network or people they can talk to.



Signs of Online exploitation

To identify potential dangers of online activities can be difficult, parents should be aware of

- Increasing secrecy of internet use
- Using devices late into the night, or taking into bathrooms
- Spending more time communicating with or discussing online friends
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated from loved ones
- Changes in appearance, interests, views, or behaviours
- Receiving an unusual number of calls
- Receiving messages from unknown friends
- Receiving gifts or money after chatting online

Effects exploitation can have on young people

Online exploitation can affect young people in many ways; they can be left feeling scared, alone and powerless. Everyone exposed to online exploitation will have a different response. It is how we manage these reactions that will help the young person to move forward.

Effects on others around the young person

Once a young person in your care has been exploited, they may become short-tempered and paranoid that people are constantly attacking them, this can leave you feeling frustrated, and unable to communicate effectively, you may even be angry at the situation. However, it is important to remember that the young person wasn't in control of the situation, and they were taken advantage of and they are always the victim.

Why do people exploit others?

People may exploit others for personal or financial gain or purely to feel in control and in a position of power over someone else. It could also be through jealousy or their insecurities about themselves. More information on **Thinkuknow**



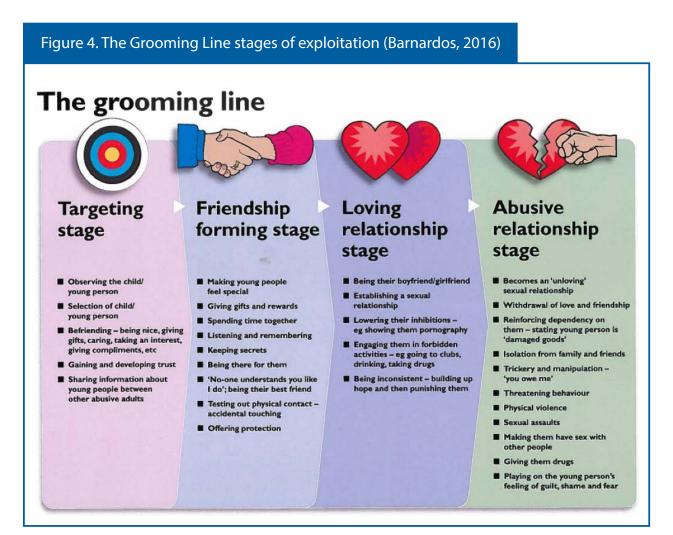
Are you worried about something which has happened online? https://thinkuknow.co.uk

Online Grooming

What does online grooming mean?

Online grooming is when someone manipulates a child online to form a friendship or relationship and build up their trust with them, allowing them to exploit and cause them harm, it can be facilitated by an adult or sometimes another young person.

The harm can take place both online and offline. When grooming is taking place, it is often intending to trick young people into sending youth-produced sexual imagery.



What action can you take to protect your child?

To help protect your child from online grooming you can make sure your child is aware of what online grooming is and they know they can talk to either yourself or another trusted adult if they feel unsafe or scared. You can also talk to them about privacy settings on social networks to help reduce people who they don't know in real life seeing their content. We can also discuss blocking and reporting functions on each social media network.



CEOP Reporting

You should also inform your child how to report to CEOP's online reporting system. (www. ceop.police.uk) CEOP is a law enforcement agency and is here to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse.

What kind of things do people report to CEOP?

- Someone online has asked me to send them nude images
- I shared a nude image with someone online and they are threatening me
- I did something that I was embarrassed about on webcam and someone has turned nasty towards me
- Someone I don't know is asking me to live-stream and do things I don't want to do
- Someone online kept asking me to meet them face-to-face and I feel pressured by them
- Someone online was talking to me about sex and it made me feel uncomfortable
- Someone online is putting pressure on me to do things I don't want to do
- Someone I met in an online game keeps trying to talk to me privately



CEOPS Checklist

- 1) Regularly discuss the above with your child
 - 2) **Ask** your child who they talk to online
 - 3) Advise your child to keep privacy settings on
 - 4) Agree with your child if they feel unsafe, they will talk to a trusted adult
 - 5) **Consider** Parental controls and filtering on all devices
 - 6) **Make sure** you know where to go if you are concerned about a child online.

Sexting

What is sexting?

Sexting is when someone sends a sexual message, photo or video to someone else. It could be a picture of you, but sometimes people send pictures and videos of other people.

Sexting means lots of different things to different people and includes:

- Images being partly or completely naked, or in underwear
- Posing in a sexual position
- Sending 'nudes' or 'dick pics'
- Talking about sexual things they are doing or want to do
- Doing sexual things on a live stream

What are the Risks?

- Once an image has been shared, you can never be sure who has seen it, saved it or shared it
- Personal or embarrassing pictures in the wrong hands can lead to bullying
- Knowing that others have seen embarrassing images can cause stress and anxiety and affect a child's confidence and self-esteem
- Unwanted pictures online could affect opportunities later in life
- Sharing images, particularly sexualised images, can increase the likelihood of a child receiving inappropriate sexual contact from strangers online

How to protect your young person

Have regular conversations with young people and express the importance of healthy relationships and reassure them that not everyone is sharing nude selfies. When discussing this topic, you can also draw on what-if situations to allow your child to learn what to do if they find themselves in this situation.

How to deal with the aftermath

If your child does share explicit content of themselves or receives any If you become aware of this, try to stay calm and reassure them that they have your support, and you'll help them resolve the issue starting with exploring the facts.

We should never use scare tactics or talk about the children being criminalised or for example put on the sex offender's register.



It's also fairly easy to have images removed from social media, make a report to the "report remove" website, www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/

You can also contact your child's school if it was shared there, they should have guidance and will have a policy and process for dealing with these types of things.



Resources available:

There is a series of videos accessible through the QR code on this page, these will inform you on sexting.

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJpo3oC1S14lORIjgchtnyK7GBoW_rVDO&si=SRJwvkmPKKluwsMx

Online Scams, Phishing and cloning

Online Scams

Parents and carers can keep ahead of the curve of new scams by visiting the National Cyber Security Centre.



Phishing: Spot and report scam emails, texts, websites and... https://www.ncsc.gov.uk

Phishing

It's important to always be cautious when receiving emails from unknown senders. Online phishing scams are becoming increasingly common, and scammers are constantly finding new ways to trick people into giving away their personal information. One way to avoid falling victim to phishing is to never click on links or download attachments from suspicious emails. Instead, always double-check the sender's email address and contact the company directly to verify any requests for personal information. By staying vigilant and following these tips, you can protect yourself from online phishing scams and keep your personal information safe.

Cloning

It is imperative to maintain awareness of online cloning scams, wherein perpetrators create identical websites or social media profiles with the intention of deceiving individuals into divulging their personal information. It is highly recommended to verify the web address or profile name to ensure its authenticity before engaging with it, and to refrain from sharing personal information unless its source is deemed trustworthy. In the event of a suspected clone, it is advised to notify the relevant authorities and avoid interaction with it. By remaining vigilant and exercising caution online, one can better safeguard oneself against the threat of online cloning scams.



Reporting Advice - North East Regional Cyber Crime Unit https://nerccu.police.uk



https://parentzone.org.uk/everydaydigital/scams



Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying includes a very wide range of online behaviours. For example, calling someone names, spreading rumours, excluding someone from a group chat, piling on someone in a game, sharing personal information or pictures, setting up a fake profile, and lots more. A quarter of 8-11s and a third of 12-15s have been bullied, either online or offline. Younger children are more likely to have been bullied whilst gaming. Older children are more likely to say it happened via social media or messaging apps.

Signs of cyberbullying - Look out for the signs

Children may be reluctant to tell parents they are being bullied or have discussions that they are worried about online bullying so it's important to look out for signs:

- Stop using devices suddenly or unexpectedly
- Seemingly nervous when using devices
- Becoming obsessive about being online
- Becoming more secretive about being online
- Changes in behaviour such as becoming withdrawn, angry or upset

How should we support young people to respond to bullying or online aggression?

Discuss blocking, screen recording evidence and reporting to social network providers. More than half of 12-15s have blocked other people on social media, and four in ten have blocked people when playing games online. A third have changed their privacy settings online to tackle cyber aggression.



Use the below guides to find out more:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/#cyberbullying



https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/



Parental conversation starters

- 1) "Can you tell me about this application?" Let's a young person know that you are interested and show an interest in their online lives.
- 2) "What would you do if this happened...?" Give young people the strategies to deal with various upsetting experiences online in the form of scenarios.
- 3) "Remember that not everyone is who they say they are online." Remind young people to always tell a trusted adult if anyone they only know online makes them feel uncomfortable or asks to meet up or share personal information or images.
- 4) "Keep your personal information safe, and other people's too." This includes full names, contact details, and sharing real-time live locations, discuss what offenders can do with this information.
- 5) "Be respectful to others online." Remind them if it's not okay offline it's not okay online, always be a good digital citizen.
- 6) "Think before you post." Help young people to be aware that their online actions can have consequences for themselves and others, including legal consequences in some serious circumstances.
- 7) "Remember to ask" Asking for, and receiving permission from others online is important before sharing images, adding people to group chats, etc.
- 8) "Remember not everything is true online." Help young people to be a critical thinker to find accurate information and to spot fake news and misinformation.
- 9) "The things other people post online might not always show what their life is really like." Reassure young people that nobody's life is as perfect as it may seem online, and judging yourself against others' online lives isn't a fair comparison.
- 10) "Recognise how going online makes you feel and take a break when you need to."
 Young people may need support in doing this, such as timers and reminders settings on their devices.

Parentzone local

Middlesbrough is part of a government pilot to educate parents around media literacy. Parentzone UK offer a range of services to help parents feel confident, safe and more in control with their children online.



https://parentzone.org.uk/pzlocal/middlesbrough

Top tips

Have a conversation!

A simple and effective way to get involved with your children and their online lives is through discussion. Maintain an open dialogue with your child and encourage them to talk to you about their internet use. Parents can help children access the amazing resources the internet has to offer whilst keeping them safe online. One of the key messages we want parents to take away from this pack is 'start a conversation' with your child and have confidence in knowing that your child knows where to go and what to do if something goes wrong.

Start with the positives.

The internet IS a fantastic place for children, providing them with exciting opportunities. Talk about the benefits of going online, keeping the conversations broad and valuing your child's opinion shows that you are interested in all aspects of their online lives. Remember to remain open-minded about their online activities and remember children use the internet in a completely different way to adults!!!

Don't ever be dismissive of online apps, games or trends, this may put off your child from continuing any conversations.

Encouraging your child to discuss what they enjoy about going online can be a helpful bridge to talking about safety messages and more difficult issues in the future.

Working together

Get together to discuss how you use technology and what you use it for. Come to a joint agreement (see later in this pack), sometimes known as a family online safety plan or family acceptable use agreement. Work together to set clear expectations and boundaries. Let your child know what they can do if anything happens online that is worrying, upsetting, or confusing, and remind them they can always talk to you about anything. Make the discussions with your child about their online experiences a regular part of family life.



Clarify!

If your child mentions something you haven't heard of, ask them to show you, or explain in more detail. Even better you could download that app or do your own research using the links in this pack and discuss ways you can support your child to use technology safely together.

Keep it relevant

As children get older, they will use technology and the internet differently. The challenges they may face will change too. To get a sense of how much they know and what support they still need, ask open-ended questions and let your child lead the conversations you have. (we have listed some typical questions you can ask in this pack).

Consider the purpose

There are appropriate ways to approach all online safety topics with different ages. For example, with a teenager, nude selfies/images can be spoken about in wider conversations around consent and healthy relationships. For younger children, you could discuss what types of information is ok to share online and when should someone come to an adult for help.

Tackling difficult conversations

Often, difficult topics of conversation can be planned for, but with online content being so accessible, occasionally they can be needed immediately. Seek support and information so that you feel prepared. This could be from family, friends, school staff, websites or helplines. Choose a time your child is relaxed, with no distractions nearby such as technology or siblings.

Plan ahead what you want to say and consider how your child might react, keep the conversation calm and positive. You may wish to take a direct approach and explain the concerns that have led you to start this conversation. Alternatively, you might feel an indirect approach is more suitable - discussing risks in general to avoid additional pressure. Whichever approach you take, give your child time to think, ask questions and share their thoughts without interruption or blame. Listen carefully to any confusion or concerns. Reassure them you are always there to help and even if you don't know the answers, you can find these out together.

What if something goes wrong? (it inevitably will!)

If your child comes to you with a concern, try to remain calm and curious, rather than angry. Avoid blame or criticism, as this may close down the conversation. If your child feels they have done something wrong or they are in trouble and make them less likely to come to you next time. Instead, remain non-judgmental, acknowledge the challenges they have overcome, and thank them for telling

online, but is unwilling to speak about it, reassure them you want to help make things better. Avoid pressuring them

you. If you find out your child is dealing with a worrying situation

to speak before they are ready.

Gently try some broad questions to open a dialogue and give them plenty of time to answer. It's okay if you are unsure what to do next, the important thing is to let your child know you are there for them. There is a lot of further support in resources section of this guide to get you to the help you need, for you decide on your next steps.

Family online safety plan

Setting up a family agreement, sometimes known as an online safety plan can be a great way of thinking through how your child will use devices and connect with others online.

If we write our goals down on paper, we are much more likely to achieve them. But we should those goals with SMART in mind.

SMART stands for:

SPECIFIC - We be specific with what we want to achieve. For example "Rosie will not chat with people online who she has not spoken to in the real world"

MEASURABLE - Goals need to be able to be seen to show improvement or worsening of the current situation, this allows you to check and review on progress made.

ACHIEVABLE - Goals need to be easily achievable in easy step by step approach that anyone can understand. For example, "I am going to this task by this date"

RELEVANT - Goals need to be focused on the behaviour going on.

TIMEBOUND - Each goal should have a deadline and the plan should also have a specific deadline.

Family agreement

A great way to start positive family conversations around safe and responsible internet use, and to agree clear expectations and boundaries.

Things to consider

(>) Getting started

- What do we enjoy doing online?
- · What apps, games and websites do we use the most?
- · What devices, tech, toys or games do we have with internet access?
- · Do we already have any rules about use of tech we want to include in our family agreement?

() Managing time online

- · How long do we spend on our devices?
- · How does it feel when we use tech for too long?
- · How do know when our screen use is interfering with family life?
- · What can we do to help avoid overusing tech?

Sharing

- What is or isn't okay to share online?
- What should we check before posting images and videos online?
- · How do we keep personal information belonging to ourselves and others safe?
- Do we need a family email address to use when signing up to new accounts?
- Do we know how to use privacy settings and strong passwords, and why these are important?
- How can we use features like livestreaming and disappearing content safely?

Q Online content

- What can we do if we see something online which seems unreliable or untrustworthy?
- · When is it okay to download files, games or apps, or click on a link?
- Do we know what the age requirements, or ratings, on the games and apps we use mean?
- Do we need any restrictions on making in-game or in-app purchases?
- · Which websites are okay for us to use?

I will put parental controls in place but review it as the children grow up

Use the questions below to help guide your conversations, focusing on those most relevant for your family.

Turn over the page for a template where you can record your agreements and expectations in writing.

Communicating online

- · Who can we talk/chat/play games with online? Do we only know them online, or offline too?
- · How can we keep ourselves safe when communicating with people who we only know online?
- · How can we be a good friend when we are online?

If things go wrong

- What can we do if we feel uncomfortable or upset by anything we see or hear online?
- What should we do if someone we only know online asks us for photos, to meet up, or to share personal information?
- Do we know where the report and block buttons are online?

(V) To finish...

- · How could parental controls help our family?
- · What will happen if one of us breaks the family agreement?
- When should we review our family agreement?

Once you've talked about your family's use of technology and the internet, think about what simple steps you can take going forward. We've given some examples for different ages below...

We agree to... (Under 11s)

mins a day.

Who is responsible

Hannah and Izzy

I will tell mum and dad when I see something that worries me.

(Pre-teens)

Who is responsible

Tom, Ella and Yasmin

I will make sure all my social networking sites are private.

permission.

I won't post photos of our children without their

(Teenagers)

Who is responsible

Amar and Yusuf

Dad

I will use my tablet for_

for them to get to easily.

I will make sure the children's

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Review date of safety plan

9
ety plan
The online safety plan allows us to put down in writing an agreement for online behaviours to help keep us safe in online spaces - It's not about control, prohibition or banning but focused on the young person to make positive change to their online lives, enabling self-regulation. knowing what to do when something goes wrong and learning and adapting to online mistakes.
We write an online safety plan with SMART objectives in mind; keep the plan Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timescale goals.
What behaviours do we want to change or impact? How are we going to do this? How will we know when it has been effective Who is responsible and by when?

Parental controls and tools

Parents can use monitoring and control tools in various ways, but research also shows negative outcomes from using these tools, including family conflict, limited access to education, breakdown of trust, and even workarounds (children intentionally bypassing controls).

In one study, high levels of monitoring led to more online risk-taking behaviors (Pybilski, 2014). While these tools can be helpful, we must consider the circumstances, values, and relationships in which they are used.

Parental controls guides will help parents to set up the right controls and privacy settings on the networks, gadgets, apps, and sites they use to give children and young people a safer online experience alongside conversations about being safe.



www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/

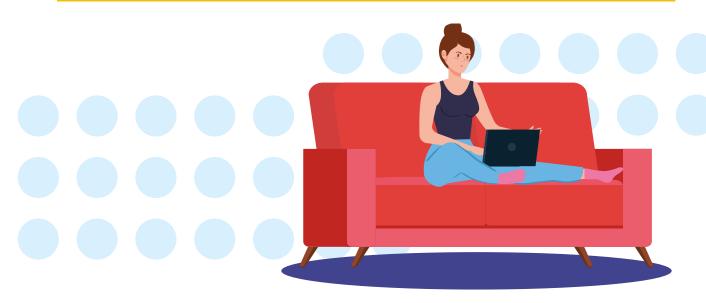
Filtering Broadband and Wifi

Broadband, mobile, and WIFI providers offer filters to limit children's access to inappropriate content. We have compiled a comprehensive list of parental guides for major broadband providers, including links and visual step-by-step instructions from the Internet Matters website.

See a full range of parental controls and how to set them up by visiting internet matters parental toolkit below.



www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/broadband-mobile/





Resources for professionals, residential carers and foster carers

To access the resources below scan the QR CODE or click VIEW WEBSITE



A charity for children in care and young care leavers.

View website



Information, help and advice about the internet.

View website



Connecting Safely Online Hub empowering all young people to have a positive time online.

View website



Help with bullying.

View website



Mental health and wellbeing information.

View website



A digital friend to support the emotional wellbeing of children aged 8-11.

View website



A national centre designed to assist everyone in reporting harmful content online.

View website



Helping parents and carers to navigate the world of video games.

View website



Advice about staying safe when you're on phone, tablet or computer.

When visiting the website select your age range

View website







