Leeds Prevent

Online Safety Advice for Parents

With many of our children currently off school and staying home due to COVID 19 the potential for online exploitation will be at its highest.

Although rare, there is a risk that with increased online activity, feelings of stress and isolation may be exploited. An understanding of digital safety will help parents and carers safeguard loved ones from a range of harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise vulnerable people.

Extremists may also use the current situation to promote hateful views, for example through conspiracy theories or through spreading misinformation.

What are the signs that my child may be being exploited online?

Online exploitation is often hard to recognise because it is a complex issue. When it comes to being drawn into extremist ideas online, sometimes there are clear warning signs, in other cases the changes are less obvious.

Although some of these traits may be quite common among young people, taken together they could be indicators that your child may need some help:

- Exploring new and unusual websites, chat forums and platforms. Harmful influences may push individuals towards platforms with a greater degree of anonymity.
- Joining new or secret groups since isolation.
- Speaking with new friends or being secretive about chats during online gaming or in forums.
- A strong desire to seek new meaning, identity and purpose.
- Using language you wouldn't expect them to know.
- Watching, sharing or creating films online linked to religious, political or racial hate.
- Becoming increasingly argumentative or refusing to listen to different points of view.

What steps can I take to keep my child safe online?

The above are merely signs that they might need help, but you know your child best and you will want to speak with them first. Check in with them and ask about what they are viewing, who they are speaking to and how they are feeling. This might feel difficult, but here are some pointers to help you:

- Listen carefully to their fears and worries. Find some helpful tips here.
- Advice and support is available to help them understand COVID 19.
- Review and adjust privacy and safety settings if you or your child is signing up to a new online service.
- You can switch on family friendly filters to help prevent age inappropriate content being accessed on devices in your home. The UK Safer Internet Centre provides guidance on how to do this.
- Internet Matters has also provided step by step guides on how to setup parental controls.

What help is available?

If you are worried about your child please do not hesitate to contact Leeds Prevent or the safeguarding team/pastoral lead at your child's school for support.

Contact Us: **Leeds Prevent** on **prevent@leeds.gov.uk** telephone 0113 535 0810 or visit **www.leeds.gov.uk/prevent**

[If you think someone is in immediate danger ring 999]

Additional information/resources:

Educate Against Hate Parents Hub provides resources and advice.
Let's Talk About It provides support to keep children safe from online radicalisation.
Thinkuknow provides resources help keep children safe online.

Leeds CITY COUNCIL