



EDITION 1 – JULY 2012

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KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN SAFE FROM ONLINE RISK

Welcome to the first edition of my newsletter for parents.

What is this “online safety” and why should you as a parent or carer be concerned? What are the risks to children; surely they are safe when they are inside playing games on the computer, Playstation or other Internet connected device? You’ve bought your children a nice new Smartphone so that they can get in touch with you in case of an emergency. But what are they using that Smartphone for, and are they putting themselves at further risk?

I intend to answer these questions and many more in further editions in the hope that through small bitesize chunks of information you will have a greater understanding of the risks and dangers to your children.

Don’t worry; I’m not going to go all

technical on you. I will make the language easy to understand, and if I have confused you, you can email me and ask a question.

But it’s not all about the gloomy side of the Internet. The whole point is to enjoy the Internet, so I’m going to be highlighting some great uses of technology also.

Additionally, I have bought a domain and created a website to accompany this newsletter:

www.parentsonlinesafety.com

It is still being updated (July 2012) but you can have a look. I will be putting further resources up there for you to have a look at. Also, any research or resources that I refer to in this newsletter will be on the website. I’ll tell you where when I write about them.

As if all that wasn’t enough, I’ll also tell you how you can secure your computers at home, for example how to set up security settings for the younger children on their Playstation, Xbox, PC’s and other devices.

As you are reading this I’m getting on with the next newsletter, so if you think of anything you would like to be included please drop me an email. I will try to answer all emails, but please forgive me if I do take a while.

In the meantime, enjoy the newsletter. If you do enjoy it let me and your friends know. If you don’t, let me know why.

Alan



WHAT IS ONLINE SAFETY

Online Safety is lots of things but can very basically be split into three main categories:

RISK

Technology is used to enjoy many things, learn new things, and connect with friends, family and like-minded people. But unfortunately there are always people that want to spoil that fun, and to make other peoples lives a misery.

There are many risks on the Internet, and as new editions of this newsletter come out I will talk you through these risks and how you can watch out for them.

For the moment, here is a short list of risks to our children:

PREDATORS – there are both men and women out there that prey on our children for sexual gratification. This is carried out in many ways, for example finding details on Facebook, friending and gaining trust (grooming).

CYBERBULLYING – either bullying or being bullied using technology. More on this on the next page.

RACIST/HOMOPHOBIC ABUSE – using the Internet to express extreme views and topics of racism and homophobia.

SEXTING – this is where under-age boys and girls are using cameras (normally on their mobile phone) to take an explicit picture to distribute to others.

This is **ILLEGAL** and is also a huge risk to children. It is also more common than you may think!

IDENTITY THEFT – having your identity stolen is something that is increasing massively and has many implications, for example emptying your bank account!

TROLLING – the Troll is somebody who takes pleasure out of making people’s lives, which are at a low ebb, even worse. An example of this would be a parent who has lost a daughter. The Troll would leave Facebook messages saying “It’s okay Mum, I’m not really dead, I’m only pretending.” This is one example of many despicable acts.

.... AND MUCH MORE

MITIGATION

This is reducing the risk to the children, and stopping children taking risks. It can be accomplished in a variety of ways, for example using technology to reduce time spent on the

internet by the younger children. More on this will be covered in later editions.

..... but most importantly

EDUCATION

- **Empowering our children** with the information to stay safe on the Internet – a life skill.
- **Raising the awareness with parents** so that they can understand the issues and risks to children when they are using the Internet.

Very briefly that is online safety: risk, mitigation, education. Of course there is much more to it than that but this is the start of a journey for you.

In later editions I’m going to be taking you through all of these.

Alan



Do you Tweet?

Follow me and say Hello ☺

@esafetyadviser



WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING ?

There is no exact definition for cyberbullying but this is as close as it gets:

Cyberbullying is when a child or teenager is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child or teenager using the Internet or any other digital technologies such as mobile phones.

It is important to distinguish between adults and children in this context. If the bullying involves an adult then it is harassment (in my opinion).

DID YOU KNOW ?

Children say cyberbullying is the worst feature of the Internet. The second worst? Facebook timeline!

Teenagers stress the importance of trust and discussion about online safety between children and parents.

Most kids want to take their own responsibility for protecting themselves online but want support from their parents

(Quotes from UKCCIS 2012)

If you have ever been bullied yourself you will know what a devastating effect this can have on your childhood, and for some this goes on into adulthood.

There is no denying that the prevalence of technology makes it easier to bully or be bullied; PC's, gaming consoles and particularly mobile phones means that a child can be bullied anywhere, from anywhere 24 hours a day. One of the effects of this is depression, and in extreme cases, suicide.

So, how is this bullying happening?

It is very easy to blame the technology when things are going wrong, but this is much like blaming a car in an accident; the technology is just the mode, it is the behaviour that is causing things to go wrong.

A lot of bullying starts "offline", in other words in real life. In days long gone a simple disagreement between friends would have been forgotten the next day, however the "always-on" nature of technology means that this

*"I WAS ON MY XBOX AND SOMEONE KEPT SENDING ME RUDE AND HORRID MESSAGES AND THINGS ABOUT MY FAMILY. IT MADE ME FEEL SICK
10 YEAR OLD BOY*

disagreement can continue whatever time of day or night. In particular if this disagreement crosses over to a social networking site like Facebook other people start to get involved; it then becomes a sustained activity with other "friends" getting involved, and can very quickly get out of hand.

So how do you deal with cyberbullying

LESS THAN A THIRD OF PARENTS TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR ONLINE ACTIVITIES

as a parent?

Let's go back to the previous page, What is Online Safety? – Risk, Mitigation, Education:

RISK

The risk is that a child or young person is being bullied. That risk can escalate to physical as well as emotional harm like depression and potentially suicide. The early warning signs that a child is being bullied include things like: changes in behaviour; anger or withdrawal; nervousness.

MITIGATION

Mitigation is the steps taken to decrease the risk, so what can you do to mitigate bullying?

There is something to be said for talking

to your children about the way in which they use technology; it gives you an awareness of the exposure they may have to risk. Advice in the past has been to limit the amount of time your child spends on technology, i.e. gaming. In addition previous advice has been to never leave your child in the bedroom out of sight, i.e. in the bedroom.

But these days that advice is quite impractical in a lot of circumstances.

The single, most positive thing you can do to mitigate your child from any risk is

EDUCATION

Start off by talking to your child about their online activity; what games do they play; who do they talk, chat or text to; have they ever had any

problems? The biggest factor here is trust. Children need to know that you understand them, and that they can come to you with a problem.

Some great tips from Childnet:

Be aware – your child could be a bully, or be bullied.

Get involved – talk to your children.

Learn how to use safety tools – coming soon in a future edition.

Remind your child – not to reply to bullying messages.

Keep the evidence – and show someone.

Report cyberbullying – to your school and/or service provider; In serious cases report to the Police.

Alan

DID YOU KNOW ?

21% of eight to 11 year olds have been deliberately targeted for cyberbullying.

For nearly half of these the experience was ongoing, not a one-off.

That equates to approx. 272,026 children.

The pattern closely mirrors studies for secondary aged pupils.

(Source: BeatBullying study – Virtual Violence II)

You can download this report and other cyberbullying information from the resources page at:

<http://www.parentsonlinesafety.com>

I hope you have enjoyed this first edition, and maybe learnt something new.

You can also SUBSCRIBE to this newsletter at: ????

COMING NEXT MONTH : FACEBOOK AND RISKS TO CHILDREN



This looks like a wonderful new resource for children. An age-appropriate 3D virtual world that puts education and child safety at its heart. Children have fun whilst learning about literacy, maths, geography and problem solving. A great way of passing those summer (rainy) days.

www.poraora.com