



### Poppy Playtime

It is important that you are aware that whilst the name and characters suggest a playful game, **it is a survival horror game with graphics that may not be suitable for your child.** It includes characters such as 'Kissy Wissy' and 'Huggy Wuggy.' **Please view this game before allowing your child to play it as it may not be appropriate for them – particularly young children.**

Children may be playing the game or just watching videos of it on sites such as YouTube or playing replicated versions on Roblox for example.

### Further information

Safer Schools NI have produced this informative:

<https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/huggy-wuggy-online-safety-review/>

### Talking to strangers online

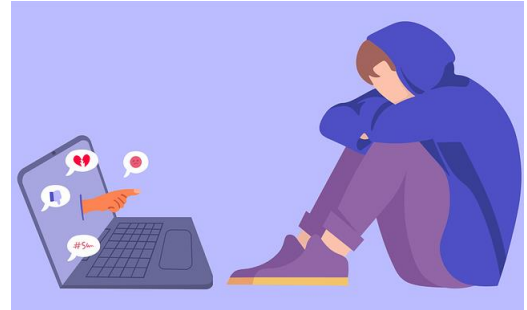
There are many apps/websites where your child may come across strangers contacting them. Some platforms will allow you to set who can contact your child as well as switch off communication so ensure appropriate settings are explored and set up. This article from ThinkUKnow talks about how to protect your child from adult content and contact:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-your-child/Online-contact-and-staying-safe/>

### Cyberbullying

#### What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying online and can take many forms such as sending malicious messages, leaving nasty comments, excluding somebody from a group chat, blackmailing or setting up a fake profile. Cyberbullying can take place across many different platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and on games such as Roblox and Minecraft.



#### What should I do if my child is being bullied online?

If your child is being bullied, then try to stay calm and let them know that it is not their fault. It is always useful to keep evidence of any online bullying and inform their school so that they are aware. Show your child how to block and/or report any users/content and review their privacy settings to limit what others can see. You may also wish to set up any parental controls that are available.

#### Further information

There is a vast amount of information available online about cyberbullying. The following links provide further information on types of online bullying, how to support somebody who is being bullied and who you can contact if you need any further advice or support.

- <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/online-bullying/>
- <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/bullying/>

### Group Chats

Group Chats are available on various messaging apps, social media apps and in some games. When your child is part of these groups, they may not know all the other members and it may even include people that they have previously blocked. Your child may come across inappropriate content and bullying can take place within these groups. Talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with kindness, like they would if they were face-to-face. The NSPCC provide further information about group chats here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

## You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok.

TikTok is a social media platform for sharing and watching short video clips. Some of the videos may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child. If your child is using TikTok then make sure appropriate security/privacy settings are applied.

### Account set up

As always, it is important that when setting up an account, your child enters their real date of birth as accounts are tailored by age e.g., direct Messaging is disabled for accounts aged 13-15. In addition, advertisements are tailored to their age. By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child must approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available, such as switching off comments and switching on restricted mode here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings>.

### Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode. You can find out more here: <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/>

### Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. We often see viral challenges on social media, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing.

### Trends and Influencers

We often see trends on social media, for example a latest trend found is around skin care routines, which can lead to children purchasing products that are completely unsuitable/dangerous for their skin. You can find out more here: <https://www.bark.us/blog/skin-care-tweens/>. Influencers are people who have a large following on social media who through recommendations and promotions, influence the behavior or buying habits of others. The NSPCC discuss what we need to be aware of here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-05-16-the-influence-of-influencers/>

### Stranger contact

Talk to your child about who is following them online and ensure that they understand that people may not be who they say they are when online. It is important that children know not to share personal information.

### Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them, including how to report comments, direct messages and another user.

### Further information

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok>

## Online Challenges

Our children may not have developed the skills and ability to critically analyse all situations yet so **it is important to talk to your child about hoaxes and challenges** that may appear on the internet. Some challenges are fun and provide no risk, **however there will be challenges that are risky/dangerous**. Just recently, a child sadly died after participating in a challenge - more information here:

<https://ineqe.com/2024/03/19/dangerous-challenge-safeguarding-risks/>

Your child may see others complete certain challenges online without being harmed and therefore may want to repeat them and not consider the potential risks to themselves. Make sure they know that they should talk to you (or another trusted adult) about what they see online, particularly if they plan to try a challenge.

We would always advise that if your child has not heard about an online challenge, then do not draw attention to it as this may lead to them searching for it out of curiosity, so just talk about challenges in a general sense. Furthermore, reassure your child that challenges that suggest that terrible things will happen if they do not complete the tasks are not real.

The following link will provide you with further information as well as content to help you talk to your child:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/advice-for-parents/tackling-the-hard-stuff-on-social-media-to-support-young-people/online-challenges-are-they-harmless/>

TikTok have also produced this resource to help you talk to your child about challenges and the potential risks:

<https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en-sg/online-challenges/>

# Playstation controls

We know that many of our children enjoy playing on games machines (as many adults do too), but we are increasingly hearing of children playing games which are not just slightly age inappropriate, but hugely inappropriate. Games such as Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty as well as many other games are certificate 18 for a good reason.

## Setting up parental controls on your child's mobile

If you do not have the same mobile phone as your child, and therefore are unable to use Google Family link or Apple Family Sharing, then you can set restrictions on your child's device instead.

### Apple devices:

To set up restrictions on your child's device directly (rather than using an app) then follow the instructions on the link below:

<https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201304>

The instructions will show you how to get to the settings on your child's phone and then how to set restrictions such as restrict content, schedule downtime, set time limits for apps. You will need to set a passcode 'use a screentime passcode' to ensure changes cannot be made after you have set them.

### Android devices:

As with the above link, this link shows you how to set up parental controls on the device itself by creating a PIN:

<https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en-GB#zippy=%2Cfor-family-members-who-manage-their-own-accounts>

## PlayStation

Does your child have a PlayStation? If so, have you set up appropriate parental controls? Some examples of the parental controls available are:

- Set age restrictions,
- Set daily limits,
- Control chat and messaging,
- Set spend limits.



### How can I block/report other players?

If your child is playing with other players, then please ensure they know how to report/block other players and to tell a trusted adult if they do come across anything upsetting or that they are unsure of. This link details how to do this based on the device they have:

<https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/block-players-psn/>

### What games are suitable for my child?

PlayStation have included a list of games along with their age rating to help you find a game that may be appropriate for your child to play.

<https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/editorial/great-ps4-games-for-kids-and-families/>

*Whilst age ratings do allow you to see if a game may be appropriate, it is also important to review the game yourself and see if it includes additional features such as chat. This will allow you to make an informed decision as to whether it is suitable and if you need to apply further parental controls.*

### Further information

You can find out more about the controls available here:

<https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/parental-controls/>

## YouTube Shorts

**You should be over 13 to post videos on YouTube.** YouTube Shorts are short videos which are similar in format to videos you find on TikTok or Instagram Reels. 'Shorts' are available to watch on the YouTube homepage or on the Shorts tab in the app. As they are quick to watch, they can be addictive and lead to excessive screen time. If your child is watching these videos, ensure they know that there is a report button. The INEQUE Safeguarding Group discuss this feature in more detail here:

<https://ineqe.com/2021/07/01/youtube-shorts-need-to-know/>

# Snapchat: new controls

## What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a social media app used for messaging and sharing photos and videos. **You must be 13+ to sign up.** Users can send messages (snaps) to others that are only seen for a set time e.g., 10 seconds and users can also upload snaps to stories, which disappear after 24 hours.



You can find out more about Snapchat here: <https://parents.snapchat.com/en-GB>

## Family Center: new features

Snapchat are expanding the features available to you in their Family Center, allowing parents to view:

- story settings: you will be able to see who your child is sharing their story with e.g. all their friends or a smaller group.
- contact settings: see who your child can be contacted by (by people they have added as a friend or their phone contacts).
- if your child is sharing their location with friends on the Snap Map.

In addition, you will be able to restrict the use of Snapchat's 'My AI.' You can find out more here:

<https://values.snap.com/en-GB/news/expanding-our-in-app-parental-tools-2024>

## More information

The NSPCC provide further information about Snapchat, **the risks involved** with using Snapchat and **tips to help keep your child safe** if they are using Snapchat.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/is-snapchat-safe-for-my-child/>

## At what age can my child start using social networks?

Internet Matters have produced this fantastic resource highlighting the minimum age limits for a variety of social media platforms as well as outlining the risks of being underage on social media. You can find out more here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking>

## Reality Check from Parent Zone



VR Headsets are becoming increasingly popular and VR games are rated by PEGI too so check their age rating/suitability.

Parent Zone, VoiceBox and Meta have created a series of videos explaining the safety and parental control tools available when using VR and how to have a conversation with your child about VR. Find out more here:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/realitycheck>

## Online Safety advice for Early Years

Internet Matters have teamed up with EE to create 'Online Safety Starts Early.' This is a 4-episode series, for those with children in Early Years. Episode one highlights how to create positive habits from the beginning and then provides links to additional resources.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/0-5/online-safety-video-guides-early-years/>

## EE Learn

EE Learn includes an array of information and guidance on how to keep your child safe online, for example tips on how to help your child when they are online. Find out more here:

<https://ee.co.uk/do-more-with-ee/learn>

# Parental Controls

Parental controls play a really important role in keeping your children safe online. This is best supported by having an open discussion about experiences online and keeping a check on what the children are playing the content of any chat rooms that exist within games. Parental controls can also be found on home internet routers and on TV services too. The use of parental controls on internet routers can prevent children accessing online games during the night, which we are increasingly aware is happening.

## WhatsApp

**You must be at least 16 years old to register for and use WhatsApp.**

WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages, voice notes, photos and videos.

### What should I be aware of?

**Group chats:** One of the key features is the group chat function. Everybody in the group, even if they are not one of your child's phone contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat. In settings, you can change who can add your child to groups. You can leave a group chat at any point so talk to your child and encourage them to leave any chat that makes them feel uncomfortable.

**Location sharing:** you can share your location on WhatsApp. Talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use but also the potential danger of sharing their location, for example with strangers.

**Blocking/Reporting:** Show your child how to block and report other users or inappropriate content. You can find out how to do it based on your child's device here:

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/>

### Further information

NSPCC provide further advice and tips to help keep your child safe:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/>

## New devices

If your child has a new device, have you set up parental controls?



### Consoles

All consoles offer parental controls such as limiting the time spent on the device or restricting who your child can communicate with. Find out the specific settings below:

- **PlayStation:** <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/psn-safety-parents-guide/>
- **Xbox:** <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub>
- **Nintendo Switch:**

<https://www.nintendo.co.uk/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-1183145.html>



### Mobiles/Tablets

You can set up parental controls and restrictions on most mobile devices, which can limit what your child can access. Additionally, make sure appropriate settings are applied on the apps your child is using.

- Apple devices: <https://www.apple.com/uk/families/>
- Android devices: <https://families.google/familylink/>

### Further information

Internet Matters provide a checklist here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/e-safety-checklist-getting-your-kids-tech-devices-set-up-safe>

## LEGO Fortnite – PEGI 7

LEGO Fortnite is free to play (in game purchases are available though). The game has been rated as PEGI 7, meaning that the content is suitable for children over the age of 7. However, you should be aware that this game can be played with up to seven people (or solo). LEGO Fortnite is only accessible on Fortnite, so you must download the main game. When setting up an account, if your child is under the age of 13, then they will be given a 'cabin account,' therefore certain features will be disabled (such as communicating with other players) unless you override them.

Please ensure you set the parental controls as appropriate for your child, we also recommend setting the appropriate settings on the console itself.

There are two worlds available - Survival or Sandbox, you can find out more about each world here so you can decide which would be best for your child:

<https://www.lego.com/en-gb/themes/fortnite/lego-fortnite-parents-guide>

# YouTube

**YouTube is intended for users over the age of 13** (however, children of all ages may use the Service and YouTube Kids if enabled by a parent/legal guardian).

## What if my child is under the age of 13?

If your child is under the age of 13 then your child should use either YouTube Kids or a Supervised Account. Which option you choose, will depend on your child's age and your requirements.

- **YouTube Kids** – this is a separate app that includes a smaller selection of videos based on the age you select:

- Preschool (ages four and under)
- Younger (ages 5–8)
- Older (ages 9–12)

- **Supervised accounts** – this is a parent-managed version of YouTube. You can select one of the following options, again depending on your child's age and your requirements:

- **Explore** - Generally for viewers aged 9+.
- **Explore more** - Generally for viewers aged 13+
- **Most of YouTube** - This setting includes almost everything on YouTube except for videos marked as 18+ and other videos that may not be appropriate for viewers using supervised experiences.

Google have created a table to show the differences between YouTube Kids and a Supervised account to help in your decision:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/10315420>

## Posting videos

**You should be over 13 to post videos.** If your child does post videos on YouTube, ensure they understand what information they should keep private and what to do if they receive negative comments. Talk to them about the different settings available -

1. Public: anyone can view the video.
2. Private: video can only be viewed by users that you select.
3. Unlisted: only people who have the link to the video can view it.

YouTube have produced these safety tips for teens when posting content:

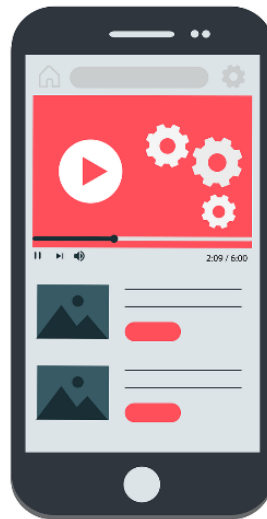
<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802244>

## How can I make YouTube safer?

- **Explore YouTube together** and see what they like to watch. Make sure your child understands that they can **talk to you** if they see anything that makes them feel uncomfortable online.

- **Restricted mode** - is an additional setting (when logged in via a Google account) to restrict the availability of mature content.

- Ensure your child knows how to **report inappropriate content/comments**. Find out more here: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802027>.



## A Guide to the Online Safety Bill

The Online Safety Bill is a new set of laws to protect people online. The laws will make social media companies more responsible for the safety of their users on their platforms. The Government have created a guide to the new laws detailing how the laws will protect children and adults. For example, the new laws mean social media companies will have to show how they are enforcing age limits.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/a-guide-to-the-online-safety-bill>

## YouTube Content Warning

The INEQE Safeguarding Group have published a report warning about the YouTube cartoon series called Jeffy. Due to the content being animated, viewers may believe that it is suitable for children to watch when in fact the content is inappropriate. You can find out more here:

<https://ineqe.com/2023/11/09/safeguarding-update-youtube-cartoon-jeffy>

## World Events

There are a lot of distressing events happening around the world, which your child may see online. Childnet have published an article discussing how you can support your child when they see something worrying or upsetting online. The article also directs you to other organisations that you can contact if you require further help and support:

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/navigating-violent-online-content-from-global-events/>

# Awareness of new apps

Keeping on-top of all of the new apps and new online services that are available is a constant and ongoing exercise for both parents and schools alike. New products are constantly being created and very often children come across them before adults are aware of their existence. If you are aware of any new apps or services that we have not covered in either this update or the previous online guide then please get in touch so we can look into it.

## Roulette style video /chat apps

Chat roulette style apps work by pairing people together anonymously to chat (and video chat) to each other. **Due to the anonymous nature of these apps, we would always recommend that that they are not suitable for under 18s.**

There is often a lot of inappropriate content and behaviour on these apps and your child is at risk of grooming as a stranger may try to connect with your child initially on an anonymous app and then encourage them to continue chatting on another app.

**It is also important that your child is aware that what they say and do whilst video chatting can be recorded and shared later without their knowledge.**

You should talk to your child about who they chat with and what they are sharing when they do. As with all apps and websites that your child accesses, make sure they know how to use any reporting tools and they know how to block other users if necessary.

The NSPCC discuss chat apps in general as well as how to talk to your child about what they are sharing with others online here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

## CapCut

Have you heard of CapCut? It is owned by the same owners as TikTok and is a video editing app. CapCut state that their services are intended for those over the age of 13 and those under the age of 18 must have consent from their parent/legal guardian. It is rated as 12+ on the App store. The App store have rated it as this because of *Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes, Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity*.



### What can I do on CapCut?

CapCut is used as a video and image editing tool allowing users to edit their videos/images as well as add music, sound effects, text and stickers.

### What should I be aware of?

- The templates are user generated, therefore they may not always be appropriate for your child to view, for example adult themes.
- CapCut includes access to a library of music that can be used within videos that may include explicit lyrics.
- Premium content – CapCut does include in-app purchases/monthly subscriptions allowing users access to premium content.

### Further information

Protect Young Eyes have published a full review of CapCut here: <https://protectyouneyes.com/apps/capcut-app-review/>

## Harmful Online Challenges

Lisa Kenevan and Hollie Dance both lost their sons to dangerous online challenges. They share their advice and tips with Internet Matters to help protect children from harmful online challenges. Internet Matters have also included links to further resources regarding online challenges at the below link:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/parent-stories/tips-protect-children-harmful-online-challenges/>

# Being unkind online

It can be very easy online for children to behave in a way that they would not if they were face to face with each other.

Talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with respect and kindness, like they would if they were face-to-face. How they act online should be how they behave on the school playground when they are following school rules. Here are some examples of what being unkind looks like online:



- Sending nasty or hurtful messages
- Leaving unkind comments
- Sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission
- Excluding somebody on purpose
- Impersonating somebody with a fake account
- Telling/sharing lies

**The above might happen whilst your child is gaming online or whilst using social media or messaging apps for example.**

## What should I do if my child is being bullied online?

Ensure that your child understands that if they receive unkind messages or see something that worries them, they should not reply or engage in conversation with the perpetrator. Instead, they should tell a trusted adult. You can use the tools within an app to report any offensive or hurtful content as well as block people so they cannot contact them again in the future.



## Starting a conversation with your child

BBC Own It have curated a selection of videos and quizzes with ideas and advice to help make the web a kinder place. You could use these to help you start a conversation with your child.

<https://www.bbc.com/ownit/curations/being-kind-online>

## Further information

- <https://bulliesout.com/need-support/be-kind-online/>
- <https://bekindonline.com/category/cyber-safety-tips/>

## Holiday Screen Time



The Ineqe Safeguarding Group published information on their website to help you manage your child's screentime during the last summer break. This is still relevant for the upcoming Easter break too. Their website includes top tips for managing screen time, activities and guides to popular apps:

<https://ineqe.com/2024/06/20/summer-time-screen-time-2024/>

## Helping your child transition to secondary school

Is your child moving to secondary school in September? Internet Matters have published lots of useful advice and resources to help you during this transition, including discussing if your child is ready for a smartphone and explaining the challenges they may face in secondary school:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/moving-to-secondary-school-online-safety-guide/>

## Accessibility features

There are many accessibility features available on iPhone and Android phones to support those with vision, speech and cognitive needs for example. You can find out more here:

**iPhone:** <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/iphone/iph3e2e4367/ios>

**Android:** <https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6006564?hl=en-GB>

# The importance of age ratings

We are very much aware of the pressures that parents can be put under by children wanting to use age inappropriate apps or playing age inappropriate games. We are very familiar with the argument that 'everyone else is playing it' and we recognise that standing up to this will cause family tension. However, we have also seen the impact that exposure to inappropriate content has caused children. One compromise position that we know some parents use (although we'd still not advocate children playing games which are certificate 18) is to play these games alongside them or be watching their play. Parents can then step in if content becomes too adult in nature.

## Kik

**Kik state you must be 16 years of age to use the app.**

### What is Kik?

Kik is classed as a social network where users can message each other, share photos/videos as well as video chat.

### What do I need to be aware of?

- Groups – once a user joins a group then your child can receive messages from other members of that group. Some of the groups are centered around topics that are inappropriate for under 18s.
- Adverts
- Location sharing
- Explicit content – including images, videos and messages.
- Live streaming/videos - risk of seeing/hearing inappropriate content.
- Talking to strangers

### What parental controls does Kik offer?

Kik does have reporting and blocking tools as outlined here:

<https://kikhelpcenter.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/4402400774043-What-can-I-do-if-my-teen-has-received-an-unwanted-or-inappropriate-message>

### Further information

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/kik>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

## Check age ratings!

There is so much that we can do online nowadays including playing games, chatting with others, watching TV or sharing our videos/photographs. Being online can be great but it is important that we set boundaries for our children to keep them safe whilst they explore being online, develop their digital resilience and understanding of what to do if anything negative happens when online.



So how can we help keep our children safe? We can start by checking age restrictions/ratings. **It is important that we follow these to ensure that what our children are doing or seeing online is appropriate for their age.**

### Where can I find age ratings?

**Films:** The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) rate films. This page includes a link to a 'Parents' Guide to Age Ratings':

<https://www.cbbfc.co.uk/resources/viewing-films-safely-online>.

**Video games:** PEGI provides age classifications for video games. PEGI considers the age suitability of a game, not the level of difficulty. It is important to note that PEGI do not take into consideration user generated content within games (such as on Roblox) and chat facilities within games.

**Apps:** Check the individual age ratings within the relevant app store. We also recommend that you download any apps and play them yourself to check their suitability.

**Social Media:** All social media networks have a minimum age rating; they are all at least 13+.

### What else can I do?

- Explain the importance of age ratings to your child.
- Go online together to see what your child is accessing.
- Set up parental controls on your broadband, devices and on any individual apps that your child is using. This will reduce the chances of them accessing or viewing anything unsuitable.
- Chat to your child regularly about what they are doing online and as always, remind your child that if anything is worrying them then they should talk to you or another trusted adult.

### Further information

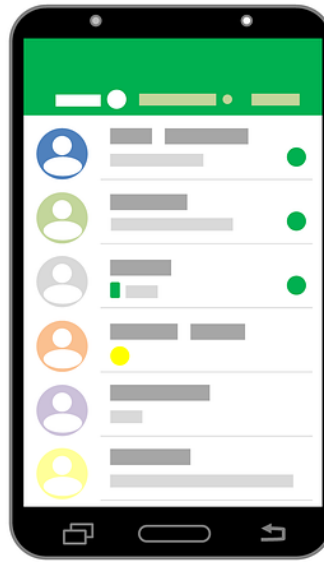
You can find out more here:

<https://www.bbc.com/ownit/take-control/understanding-age-ratings>

# Chatting online

Following a recent report by the BBC detailing how a child was asked for inappropriate images when chatting online (source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-68616730>), we thought we would discuss the dangers your child might face when communicating with strangers online.

In addition to social media apps that include a chat facility, most online games also allow communication, for example FIFA and Fortnite. Depending on the game, this may be via the in-game text chat, direct messages or talking through headphones. Some games do offer the ability to switch communication off or restrict bad language so make sure settings appropriate to your child are set up for each of the games they play. You need to be aware that there are people who may use these games to start chatting to your child and then encourage them to chat on alternative apps (which are more private, encrypted or have fewer safety options). Talk to your child about the dangers of doing this.



## What risks are there with chatting online?

- Bullying
- Inappropriate chat – children may encounter explicit or inappropriate content.
- Contact from strangers – talk to your child about who is contacting them online.
- Sharing personal information – talk to your child about what information they share with others including images.
- Sextortion - this is a form of blackmail where somebody threatens to share a nude/sexual image of you.

## How can I mitigate the risks?

- Ensure your child is accessing age-appropriate apps/games and that appropriate parental controls are set up.
- Chat to your child about the risks above so they are aware of what can happen online.
- Depending on the age of your child, it may be more appropriate for devices to be used in family rooms so you can monitor what they are doing and if they are chatting to others.

## Reporting other users

It can be difficult to moderate online chat so ensure your child knows how to block and report others who make them feel uncomfortable and that they know to talk to you or a trusted adult if they have any concerns.

## Further information

- <https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-your-child/Online-contact-and-staying-safe/>

## Tips to promote positive body image

If your child is viewing content online, particularly on social media, then the images they are seeing may be edited or even fake. A child may not yet be able to distinguish between reality and what is not real/fake, which may impact their own body image.

Internet Matters provide advice on how to empower your child to develop a positive body image and what you can do to help. Find out more here: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/promoting-positive-body-image-with-children/>

## CBeebies Little Learners app

The CBeebies Little Learners app has been created with BBC Bitesize and educational experts to provide your child with a fun learning experience. It includes activities based on the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage framework, for example sounds and letters and numbers and shapes. You can learn more here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zndjh4j>

## LEGO Build and Talk

LEGO® have created Build and Talk to help you chat to your child about online safety. The activities have been created for children ages 6 to 9.

Firstly, you pick an activity to do and then you read a story, which includes questions and conversation prompts, whilst you build LEGO® together. This is a fantastic way to start talking to your child about topics such as screentime and cyberbullying. Find out more here: <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/sustainability/children/buildandtalk/>

# Fortnite

We are aware of the huge popularity of Fortnite as a game (despite its age rating of 12) and we also know that a considerable number of the children at Guildhall play this game regularly. We are also aware that due to the highly addictive nature of the gameplay, the way the game is structured within its online world, this provides challenges for parents. We have heard of children playing this in their rooms into the early hours or even all night long, feeling unable to leave the game because of its real-time nature and the way it restarts after a character dies. We have also heard about astronomical bills being run up by children, using payment credentials of their parents.

## Managing Screen time from Internet Matters

Are you worried your child has too much screentime or would like more advice on how to support your child in managing their screen time? Internet Matters have a wealth of information on their website to help support you.

This first link discusses how to get the most out of screen time and how to talk to your child about screen time based on their age:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/protect-your-child>

This second link provides advice on how to tackle too much screen time and what the signs of too much screen time might be:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/deal-with-it/>

This final link provides a guide on how to balance screen time:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/creating-a-balanced-digital-diet-with-screen-time-tips/>



## Fortnite Battle Royale

Fortnite Battle Royale is rated PEGI 12 because it features moderate violence which means it is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age.

It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Fortnite does include a chat facility, which adds further risks.



### What is Fortnite?

There are different versions of Fortnite, including Battle Royale, which is free to play (although in-app purchases are available). In Battle Royale up to one hundred players compete against each other.

### What do I need to be aware of?

- **Chatting to strangers and inappropriate language:** Fortnite contains voice and text chat. Due to the nature of the game, your child may be chatting to strangers and may hear inappropriate language. Ensure your child knows how to report players for any inappropriate behaviour.
- **In app purchases:** All users can purchase V-Bucks directly through the game so make sure you don't store your card details within the game/device and restrict purchases.

### Parental Controls

Fortnite includes several parental controls to help you make it a safer environment for your child including disabling voice chat, filtering language and setting privacy settings. **Also, remember to set up age-appropriate parental controls on the device your child is playing on.**

### Further information

Virgin Media outline how to set up the different parental controls available: <https://www.virginmedia.com/blog/parental-controls/gaming-fortnite>

## Does your child need a mobile phone?

If you are thinking about giving your child their own phone, then you might find this article from Family Lives useful as it discusses things you need to consider:

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/health-and-development/does-your-child-need-a-mobile-phone>

# Instagram

You will probably know that Instagram is used to post photos and videos, but did you know that it can also be used to message, voice/video call and send disappearing messages? Users can also upload to 'Stories' (which disappear after 24 hours), broadcast live and upload reels (short videos).

**You must be over 13 years of age to set up an account.** To create an account, you must enter a date of birth (but it is not verified). *When you set up an account for users under 16 years old, the account is set to Private. This is the recommended setting so that your child approves who follows them and sees their content.* Even if your child's profile is private, their bio (at the top of their profile) can still be seen by **everyone**. Check they have not included personal information here e.g. they should not be wearing their school uniform in their photo.

Instagram includes several privacy settings, so go through these with your child and ensure they are set appropriately. Settings include:

- Messages/Group chats – set who can message you/add you to groups.
- Story replies – you can turn this off or choose who can message you.
- Hidden words – turn this option on to hide comments/messages that may be offensive. You can also add your own custom words or emojis.

Make sure your child understands that there is a risk that content they upload can be shared with others without their permission as other users can screenshot it.

## Supervision

You can set up supervision on your child's (aged 13-17) Instagram account. This gives you access to a set of tools including the ability to see who they follow/who follows them, how much time they are spending on Instagram, set a time limit and view accounts your child has blocked. Your child can also share when they have reported anything to Instagram with you. Learn more here: <https://help.instagram.com/658522825492278>

## Safety Features

Ensure your child knows how to report posts and people, how to unfollow and block people, delete and turn off comments. View here: <https://help.instagram.com/269765046710559>

## Quiet mode

Your child can activate quiet mode, so they do not receive notifications (to provide less distraction whilst studying and at night time).

## How can I keep my child safe on Instagram?

The NSPCC have published a blog with everything that you need to know: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/keeping-children-safe-on-instagram/>

## More information

- Visit the family centre to learn more about the features available: <https://familycenter.instagram.com/>
- Download a parent's guide to Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/299484113584685>

## Do you need help managing your child's device?

You can use Google Family Link or Apple Family Sharing to help you depending on your child's device.

### Google Family Link

This is a parental control app from Google that lets you:

- See activity reports showing how long they spend on each app.
- Approve or block new app downloads.
- Set screen time limits.
- Find their location (using their device).

You will need to download an app and then decide appropriate settings.

<https://families.google.com/familylink>

### Apple Family Sharing

You can set up Family Sharing in the settings of your device. Family Sharing allows you to:

- Share Apple subscriptions.
- Share purchases from the App Store.
- Approve what children purchase/download.
- Limit screen time.
- Share locations and find devices.

<https://www.apple.com/uk/family-sharing/>

### Monitoring Apps (paid for)

In addition, there are apps that you can pay for that you may find provides a better solution for you. Whilst we cannot recommend a specific product, these are some examples that you could review and test using a free trial:

- Norton Family: <https://uk.norton.com/products/norton-family>
- Qustodio: <https://www.qustodio.com/en/>
- Family Time: <https://familytime.io/>

# Smartphone free childhood

You will all know that we have been sharing the research and the arguments for a smartphone free childhood over the recent months. This has been driven by the number of online incidents we have needed to manage in school and the impact of these on the children. We do advise parents to think very carefully before giving your child a smartphone. The issues of addiction, impact on sleep, exposure to cyber-bullying, exposure to other inappropriate material through apps such as TikTok, Instagram etc are very real indeed.

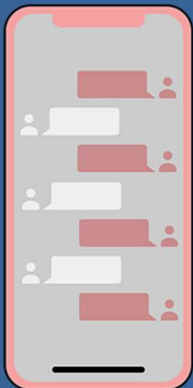
## Smartphone Free Childhood

Smartphone Free Childhood is a parent-led movement whose mission is to protect children from the dangers of using smartphones too young.

The premise behind this movement is that all parents/carers of a class all agree not to give their children smartphones (therefore the level of peer pressure is reduced) for a set time or until a specific age. Are you ready to join? Find out more here: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

You may feel your child does need a phone, particularly if they are walking home by themselves but there are alternatives to the smartphone, including a watch, which are listed here: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives>

If your child already has a smartphone then Internet Matters have a section on their website with advice on smartphone safety: <https://www.internetmatters.org/set-up-safe/>



## Is being online affecting our child's mental health?

There are many positives to being online, but we do need to be aware of the negative aspects including those that may impact our child's mental health and wellbeing, for example:

- **Social media** (spending too much time on social media, comparing ourselves to others, filtered images and desire to achieve likes).
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Seeing inappropriate content**
- **Constantly connected/information overload**
- **Excessive screentime**
- **Negative impact on our sleep**



### Further information

- Childnet discusses digital wellbeing in more detail and includes top tips and conversation starters: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/digital-wellbeing/>
- The NSPCC provides further information about mental health including signs to look out for and how to get further support: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/>

## WhatsApp Group warning

Whilst WhatsApp has an age rating of 13+ (recently lowered from 16), a BBC investigation has found that children as young as nine have been added to WhatsApp groups and seen inappropriate content. If your child is using WhatsApp, check their group settings as by default, group privacy settings are set to 'everyone,' which means anybody can add your child to a group without their approval. You can change this setting to 'My Contacts' so only contacts can add them to groups without their approval and if somebody who is not a contact wants to add them to a group then they will need to send them an invite.

You should talk to your child about the risks of joining groups and show them how to use the reporting/blocking tools. You can find out more about the BBC investigation here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy0l4z8n1p9o>

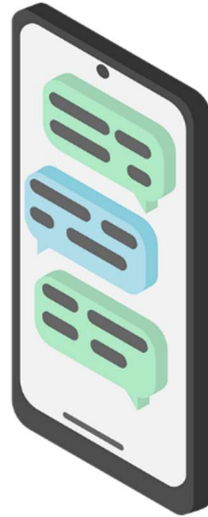
# Digital Addiction

Are you worried that your child is addicted to being online/on their device? Recent research from Ofcom reported that “34% of parents of children aged 3-4 said it was hard to control it, rising to half (49%) of parents of children aged 16-17.”\* Bark have produced a blog which discusses what addiction is, how to recognise the signs and examples of what digital addiction can look like. You can find the blog here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/digital-addictions/>

[\*source:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2024> accessed 24.4.24]



## Online Gaming Safety Tips: For parents/carers of neurodivergent young people

Internet Matters have published guidance outlining the benefits and risks of online gaming and how you can support your neurodivergent child. You can read the guide here:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/internetmattersorg/guidance-for-parents-of-neurodivergent-gamers-internet-matters/full-view.html>

## Encountering violent online content starts at primary school.

New research commissioned by Ofcom reported that “all children who took part in the research came across violent content online, mostly via social media, video-sharing and messaging sites and apps. Many tell us this is before they have reached the minimum age requirement to use these services.”

You can read more about Ofcom’s findings here:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2024/encountering-violent-online-content-starts-at-primary-school>

## Talking about online toxicity

Vodafone have published an article highlighting research which shows that “69% of preadolescent boys have encountered misogynistic content online”. This article discusses how to approach this issue with your child and what to do if they start repeating negative views seen online.

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/how-to-talk-to-your-teenage-sons-about-online-toxicity/>

# Misinformation online

There is a lot of information online that is incorrect/fake or misleading and it can sometimes be difficult for adults to distinguish between what is true and what is fake, never mind for younger people. We need to develop digital literacy skills in our children by encouraging them to think critically about what they read online and to fact check. Both the BBC and Channel 4 have fact checking areas on their websites:

- [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality\\_check](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check)
- <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/>

One way to start the conversation would be to play a game such as ‘Can you spot the signs of fake news?’ from the BBC:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwfm8hv>

### Further information

- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/online-issue/misinformation>



# More on Mobiles

We know that many families will be considering whether or not to get phones for their children, and some of you already have. The emerging evidence that we are seeing, just at Guildhall, is that children are very quickly overly attached to their phones and we have heard about chat groups starting at the end of school and then continuing until midnight, night after night. There are alternative phones that you can provide for your children which are not smartphones and still provide all of the security you might need if you want to give them the ability to ring you in an emergency.

## iOS 18 Launch

Apple have recently released their latest operating system, iOS 18. iOS 18 offers lots of new features (some are restricted to newer phones) but one feature that you should be aware of is the ability to now lock and hide apps.

When an app is locked, Face ID, Touch ID or your passcode will be required to open it. This also means that notifications will no longer be shown for that app. Additionally, apps can now be hidden so they can only be accessed through a hidden apps folder that is also locked. This new feature illustrates the need to have regular chats with your child about what they are using their phone for.

## Vault (secret) Apps

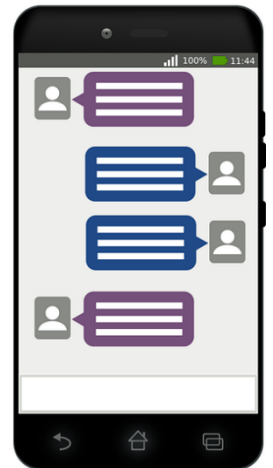
Have you heard of Vault Apps? They are basically secret apps that are concealed by looking like a normal, less conspicuous app. For example, one of these apps looks and works like a working calculator when opened, but when a passcode is entered, it reveals photographs, videos, documents and contacts. One way to prevent your child from using these apps is to ensure parental controls are set up so you can review all app purchases. You can find out more here:

- <https://www.bark.us/blog/find-hidden-apps/>
- <https://www.safes.so/blogs/vault-apps/>

## Mobile phones: do you know the risks?

We know that children having access to a smartphone can expose children to risks including:

- Viewing inappropriate content
- Excessive screen time/use, which in turn can affect their mental health and sleep pattern.
- Contact from inappropriate people/grooming
- Cyberbullying
- Spending money on in-app purchases/scams



### What effects do mobile phones have on children's mental health?

Compass discuss the research around this important topic, outlining the positive and negative effects that mobile phones have:

<https://www.compass-uk.org/services/compass-changing-lives/what-effects-do-mobile-phones-have-on-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/>

### EE launches Age Guidance

EE has launched age guidance for smartphone usage to improve children's digital wellbeing. In summary, they recommend that children under 11 should use non-smart devices, for children aged 11-13, they advise that if a smartphone is used, then parental controls should be enabled and access to social media restricted. Finally, for 13-16-year-olds they still recommend that parental controls are implemented and appropriate restrictions set up. You can read the full guidance here:

<https://newsroom.ee.co.uk/ee-launches-age-guidance-for-smartphone-usage-in-drive-to-improve-childrens-digital-wellbeing/>

### Could you delay when your child is given a smartphone with Smartphone Free Childhood?

The premise behind this movement is that all parents/carers of a class all agree not to give their children smartphones (therefore the level of peer pressure is reduced) for a set time or until a specific age:

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>

### What device?

When you think it is the right time for your child to have a phone, then Which? provide an overview of some options available:

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phones/article/buying-a-first-mobile-phone-best-dumb-phones-and-smartphones-for-kids-aA03C3Y8aTzr>

# Instagram: new Teen account features

## You must be over 13 years of age to set up an account.

Instagram is used to post photos and videos as well as send direct messages, make voice/video calls and send disappearing messages. Users can also upload to 'Stories' (which disappear after 24 hours), broadcast live and upload reels (short videos).



## Teen accounts – NEW feature

Instagram have introduced Teen Accounts to try and create a safer experience for them. With a Teen Account, who they can contact is limited and the content they access will be set to the most restrictive setting to reduce exposure to sensitive content. If a teen would like to override any of these settings, then they will need their parent's permission by setting up parental supervision. These changes will be in place for all new users straightaway so any users that sign up that are under 16 will automatically be given a Teen Account. Existing users will be moved over to Teen Accounts over the next couple of months (in the UK).

## Supervision settings – new features

Instagram already offers a supervision facility, but they have added to the features to include:

- The ability to see who your child has messaged in the past week (you will not be able to see the contents of these messages)
- The option to block your child from accessing Instagram at certain times e.g. during school or at night.
- The ability to see what topics your child has chosen to see.

Read the press release from Instagram, which outlines all the upcoming changes: <https://about.fb.com/news/2024/09/instagram-teen-accounts/>

## You may not be seeing everything!

Did you know that you can hide your stories and live videos from specific people so your child could be uploading content but restricting your account from viewing it?

## Safety Features

Ensure your child knows how to report posts and people, how to unfollow and block people, delete and turn off comments. View here: <https://help.instagram.com/269765046710559>

Make sure your child understands that there is a risk that content they upload can be shared with others without their permission as other users can screenshot it.

## More information

- Visit the family centre to learn more about the features available: <https://familycenter.meta.com/uk/>

## Learn Through Play with Sesame Street

The Sesame Street website has a whole host of resources, activities, and games from supporting with learning ABCs to discussing tough topics such as grief.

<https://sesameworkshop.org/>

## Expert Approved Apps for Learning at Home

On the Google Play Store, you can find a list of expert approved Apps for learning at home suitable for children up to the age of 12.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/category/FAMILY>

## Be aware of what you share

Get Safe Online have produced a set of tips to help you avoid oversharing and outlines what the consequences might be if you do:

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/whatdoyoushare/>

## Staying safe online with Google Families

Google have a one stop resource to help you and your family stay safe online. It includes how to set up parental controls and important steps on how to keep your children safe online. You can find out more here:

<https://families.google/>

# The Danger of Algorithms

Algorithms are in many ways the hardest thing to combat in dealing with online safety. Dummy algorithms trialed for a teenager and then not interacted with or used at all, very quickly start to get populated with links to all manner of unwelcome content. These include details of eating disorders, self-harm, pornography, sexual violence and extremeist views. This demonstrates that the age aspect of the algorithm is predicting and linking to inappropriate content. All parents need to be acutely aware of the dangers of this.

## Need app ideas?

Internet Matters have curated a list of age-appropriate apps depending on what your aim is when your child is spending time online:

### Skill Building apps:

If you would like to help your child develop a new skill, then you might find some useful ideas here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/skill-building-apps-guide-for-kids/>

### Apps to keep your child entertained:

These apps are organised into age groups so you can find an app that is suitable for your child:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/13-great-apps-to-keep-your-kids-amused-in-the-school-holidays/>

### Apps to help get your child active:

Again, these apps are organised by age group:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/>

### Wellbeing apps:

These apps are organised by topic such as sleep aids or managing anxiety and will help your child develop an understanding of how to look after their own wellbeing:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/wellbeing-apps-guide-for-kids/>

## Social Media Algorithms

### What is an Algorithm?

Algorithms influence what we see on social media platforms and predicts what type of content we are most likely to interact with, thereby keeping us online for longer. The algorithm uses information such as who you follow, what you have searched for and what you have watched, liked or shared to determine what it thinks most interests you, to then show you this content more, for example, in the explore tab on Instagram.



### What do I need to know?

Whilst there are benefits to algorithms, for example it means we tend to see content that does interest us, unfortunately there are negatives as well. They can lead to increased screentime as we continue to see things that interest us. Secondly, it can lead to users being shown large amounts of inappropriate content which can exacerbate negative body image or heighten access to misogyny content. It can also lead to 'echo chambers' where you are only seeing content that relates to your opinion rather than seeing a balanced viewpoint.

The Family Online Safety Institute discuss algorithms in more detail as well as tips for you to help your child, such as how to reset their algorithm:

<https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-social-media-algorithms>

## WhatsApp: chat lock/secret code

**You must be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp.** Did you know that you can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting? If a user locks a chat, then the chat will appear at the top under locked chats but cannot be viewed without your device password or biometric (face id/fingerprint). Furthermore though, a user can apply an additional setting to hide the locked chat (so it does not appear in their chat list and can only be accessed via the search bar). Whilst this feature adds privacy, it can make it difficult to monitor what your child is doing on WhatsApp, which is why it is important to have regular chats with your child.

# Roblox

Roblox is a platform consisting of a collection of games. Players can either create games or play games that other users have created. It is free to download (however subscription options and in game/app purchases are available) and can be played across numerous devices. **A lot of the content is user generated, which may mean not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play. It is important to set up appropriate parental controls for your child.**

**It hit the news this week, when the CEO suggested that parents worried about their children on Roblox simply shouldn't let them use it.**

## What rating is Roblox?

PEGI rate Roblox with a Parental Guidance label, this is because it is difficult to rate due to the huge level of user generated content. It is rated for **'Teens'** on Google Play and **12+** on the App store.

## What should I be aware of?

**Chat Facility** - Players can chat to each other on Roblox. You can turn communication off completely or add restrictions, such as only communicate with friends.

**Virtual Currency** - Players can buy Robux (their virtual currency) to buy in-game upgrades or accessories. For children under 13, you can set the Monthly Spend Restriction in settings.

**Game content** – as mentioned, users create games so sometimes the content/themes may not be appropriate for your child.

## How do I report abuse and block users?

Roblox have a Report Abuse system so show your child how to use it to report inappropriate content as well as how to block other users. There are different ways of doing this depending on the device being used.

## How do I set up parental controls and a pin?

Parental controls are available within settings. We recommend that you explore the parental controls available and set as appropriate. You can enable a PIN, which means that changes cannot be made without this pin. You can set up Allowed Experiences, which allows you to select age-appropriate experiences, so your child can only join experiences that match their age. Age categories available are for all, 9+, 13+ and 17+. All experiences are still searchable though.

*To view content that is suitable for 17+, then a user must participate in a verification process by submitting valid ID.*

## Further information:

- <https://corp.roblox.com/parents/>
- <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/checklists/roblox/>

Thank you for taking the time to read this update for our online safety guide, I hope that you've found it helpful. The previous edition of the guide is also still worth referencing (even though it is quite a lengthy document), as it will contain details about a number of other apps and issues that you and your children might face whilst trying to navigate the online world.

We will be starting to send out more regular updates from now on to reflect just how quickly some of the challenges change throughout the year.

## Check in on an iPhone

On iOS 17, you can use check in to let others know when you have arrived at a destination. When using check in, it monitors your journey and notifies the other person when you arrive at your destination or if you are not progressing as you should.

You can also use it to specify a period of time so if you are meeting somebody new then you can set a timer and if you don't end the Check In before this time then the other person is notified.

You can find out how to use this feature here: <https://support.apple.com/en-in/guide/iphone/iphc143bb7e9/ios>

## Discussing distressing news

Following on from the recent awful events in Southport, INEQUE Safeguarding Group have published an article to help you when discussing distressing news with your child. The article also includes a downloadable resource that children can read when news becomes overwhelming for them.

Find out more here: <https://ineqe.com/2024/08/02/discussing-distressing-news-events-with-children>

## Family Quiz for Online Wellbeing Tips

The NSPCC have created a quiz that can be completed as a family to help you have discussions together and find out about the NSPCC's top tips for positive online wellbeing.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-wellbeing/positively-online/quiz/>