I’m worried my child might see something inappropriate online

There’s no watershed, ‘top shelf’ or ID required online but that doesn’t mean you can’t protect your child from adult content. Find out how to help them navigate the web safely.

Things they might see

The internet is a public and open place, one where anybody can post and share content. This is part of the fun but it does mean that your child might see something that is intended for adults which might confuse or upset them. This could be violent or sexual content, extreme opinion or inappropriate advertising.

No matter how young your child is, if they are using the internet you will need to have the conversation with them about ‘things they might see’ online.

You can’t always be there when your child is using internet enabled devices - even though it is advisable as much as possible when your child is at primary age. So it is important that your child knows that they can come to you if something online confuses or upsets them.

Children often tell us that a reason they don’t tell a parent or carer when something goes wrong or upsets them online is because they are worried the adult will over react and take their technology away from them.

What is inappropriate?

Inappropriate can mean different things to different people, from swear words to pornographic images or videos, and what is inappropriate for your child will also change as they grow and develop.

Every household will have different ideas on what’s appropriate for their child, so discuss this as a family and give your child age appropriate examples.

Having a conversation

It is important to explain, especially to younger children, what is meant by 'inappropriate' using language they will understand.

Remember, no matter what you've told them, as we all were as children, your child will be curious as they grow. They might search for content they are too embarrassed to talk to you about, don't understand or think they'll find funny.

Talk to them about what they might see if they were to type the wrong words or actively look for content on a search engine like Google. Make sure they know that whatever they have seen, if it's upset them or raised questions that they can always come to you.

What can you do to protect them?

As well as having the all-important conversation, there are some technical (and simple) things you can do to limit what they see:

- **Set Parental Controls.** Parental Controls software will enable you to filter out pornography and other inappropriate content. You can also use it to set time limits for using the internet and apply age restrictions for games they play. Most major Internet Service Providers, like Talk Talk, Sky, BT and Virgin Media, provide free parental controls, as do most devices and games consoles. Find out more about setting them up (www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Parental-controls) - it isn't as difficult as you might think!
- **Set the search engine (e.g. Google, Bing, etc.) they use to a 'safe' mode.** This means that the search engine will look to block any obvious adult content and not provide it in search results.
- **YouTube is particularly popular with primary aged children** but think about the range of content they can be exposed to on it. Distressing news stories and other adult content will often appear on YouTube so don't use YouTube as a TV. It is all too easy for children to click on related videos and end up watching something more adult so make sure you supervise younger children using it. It is also advisable that you set YouTube search to 'safe mode'. You can find out how in the YouTube Safety Centre (https://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/safety.html)

Remember, parental controls and filters are just tools. They are not 100% accurate and are no substitute for open and honest conversations with your child.

This information has been adapted from the Thinkuknow parents and carers website – **www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents**

Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency CEOP command. The CEOP command works to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation both online and offline. Thinkuknow offers a range of safety information for children, young people, practitioners and parents/carers

The CEOP Safety Centre offers information and advice for children and young people, parents/carers and professionals on reporting child sexual exploitation and abuse and provides a route to report directly to CEOP – **www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre**.