



# Northumberland

## County Council

### Staying Connected

During this time, we all need to be physically distant from our friends and extended families, but it is important we are not socially distant. Staying connected is one way we look after our mental wellbeing.

Technology has made staying in touch easier. When encouraging children to stay connected with their friends through technology, it is also important to have conversations about online safety. We advise you follow the following principles outlined by NSPCC for keeping your children [safe online](#):

#### 1. Talk to your child

[Talk to them](#) about what they're doing online and how they can stay safe. Let them know they can come to you, or another adult they trust if they're feeling worried or upset by anything they've seen online. They can also get support from [Childline](#).

#### 2. Explore apps and sites together

Explore what your child likes to do online together. This can help you to understand why they're using certain [livestreaming or video apps](#). You can use [Net Aware](#) to help you.

#### 3. Agree what's appropriate together

Agree your own rules as a family when using apps, sites or games. You can use our [family agreement template](#) to help get you started.

#### 4. Check your settings

Check the technology your family uses and use privacy and location settings to keep your child safe. You can call our 02 NSPCC Advice Line for support on 0808 800 5002.

Think U Know have produced two helpsheets with advice on keeping your children safe online while schools are closed, as well as home activity packs for teaching children about online safety:

- [Parents Helpsheet: Primary](#)
- [Parents Helpsheet: Secondary](#)
- [Home activity packs](#)

You might also consider downloading the Own it app. The BBC [Own It](#) app is an online safety and well-being app for young people. It helps them keep track of how they're feeling, build online skills and access support for problems they might face online. It also includes a special keyboard that responds to what they type. It might give users helpful tips and advice, such as a prompt to think before sending a message or directing them to help.

Below are some examples of apps that allow children to stay connected with their friends. ***Northumberland County Council does not endorse a particular app. We recommend you explore the apps before your child uses them and that parents supervise use.***

## Video-calling apps

- [Caribu](#) 

Video-calling app integrating children's books and activities. A 'virtual playdate', as kids can color and play games together. One-on-one experience.

Suitable for younger children.

- [FaceTime](#) 

Make video or phone calls to contacts, using their phone number or Apple ID.

[FaceTime: A guide for parents \(NSPCC\)](#)

Official age rating 4+

- [Houseparty](#) 

Video calling and messaging app; can also play games such as HeadsUp and Pictionary. You can talk to friends and friends of friends. Users create 'rooms' and choose specific people to talk to. However, if the 'room' is not 'locked', others (friends or friends of friends) can pop into the video chat. To keep video chats private and secure, it is important to choose private settings and lock their chat room.

For further advice please see '[What is the Houseparty app? What parents need to know](#)'.

Official age rating 13+

- [Marco Polo](#) 

Video calling 1:1 or in a group; if the person you are connecting with isn't available, the app records the message for them to view later. Can only add people using their phone number.

Official age rating 4+

- [Messenger Kids](#) 

Video calling and messaging app; parents control the contact list.

Designed for children aged 6-12.

- [Zoom](#) 

Designed originally for businesses, Zoom can support large numbers of video participants, for example a whole classroom catch up.

Office age rating 4+

## Online Games

### [Childline advice on online gaming](#)

- [PopJam](#)

Online platform and app with a focus on creativity. Users can create and share art, as well as taking quizzes. You can comment openly but there's no private chat and the app is only open between 6am and 11pm – users cannot interact with any content outside these hours.

[PopJam: A guide for parents \(NSPCC\)](#)

Aimed at 7-12 years olds.

- [Safe Kid Games](#)

- [Uno](#)

## Other

- [Netflix Party](#)

Watch films and chat with your friends.

[Netflix Party: What parents should know \(NSPCC\)](#)

Official age rating 13+