Headteacher's Blog

Whittingham CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dear Parents, Carers and Friends,

Welcome to this weeks special Blog where there is our usual updates and information and also a focus on keeping safe online, health and well being. In addition to my headteacher role I am also responsible in supporting children and their families with additional educational and emotional needs so please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any advice or signposting to other professionals who may help. As always, Mr Charlton and I are on Gate Duty morning and afternoon. If you have any queries, concerns or suggestions as to how we can make our school even better please do not hesitate to speak to us.

Best wishes,

Belinda Athey - Headteacher.

Safer Internet Day 2022 will be celebrated on 8th February with the theme 'All fun and games? Exploring respect and relationships online'.

From gaming and chat, to streaming and video, young people are shaping the interactive entertainment spaces they are a part of. Safer Internet Day 2022 celebrates young people's role in creating a safer internet, whether that is whilst gaming and creating content, or interacting with their friends and peers.

About Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day is celebrated globally in February each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology for children and young people, and to inspire a national conversation about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically, and creatively. Safer Internet Day 2022 is on 8th February and will be celebrated with the theme 'All fun and games? Exploring respect and relationships online'.Coordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, Safer Internet Day is celebrated in over a hundred countries coordinated by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network, with the support of the European Commission, and national Safer Internet Centres across Europe. Please see additional resources on the pages 3 onwards of this Blog for more details.

Northumberland Parent and Carer Forum

Northumberland Parent Carer Forum (NCPF) work with the local authority, health and social care to improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families.

They listen to the experiences and wishes of families and make sure that those views are heard by those providing services, so that they can be part of every stage of planning and decision-making.

If you would like to hear from the NPCF and find out how to contribute to future work then please visit their Facebook page, get in touch on Twitter or contact via email at enquiries@npcf.co.uk.

In order to represent the views of children, young people with SEND and their families, they need to hear from as many families as possible. Please see **https://npcf.co.uk for further information**

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Please find links to some excellent websites that provide support:

Young Minds https://www.youngminds.org.uk

Young Minds Parent Helpfinder https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/find-help

https://www.beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk

https://padlet.com/nies1/y03o13m86elq0zja

NHS Family Action https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/childrens-mental-health/

Winstons Wish Bereavement support https://www.winstonswish.org

The Samaritans 24hr support https://www.samaritans.org

Top10 tips Supporting children advice parents https://ssscpd.co.uk/education/parentsandguardians/child-mental-health-10-tips-for-parents

Please see page 2 for more information or for face to face help in my SENCO and Mental Health and Wellbeing role I am here to help, support or can help signpost you to other professionals as much as possible.

ONLINE RESOURCES

A list of websites & apps that are helpful for managing mental health

NHS Every Mind Matters

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

This website offers a range of mental health advice as well as an interactive quiz that's designed to help you feel more in control of your emotional/mental wellbeing.

Kooth

www.kooth.com

This site contains free mental health support with their online counsellors. It is a free sign up service that has resources such as discussion boards, helpful tips/articles written by young people and an option for them to write mood journals & set positive goals.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

A mental health charity for children & young people that has a wide variety of helpful videos, games and articles. They have a free telephone helpline (0800 1111) and message boards where young people are encouraged to share experiences and support each other in a positive way.

Papyrus

www.papyrus-uk.org

A mental health charity dedicated to preventing young suicide by providing support and resources for young people and their families. They have their "Hopeline" (Call: 0800 068 4141 / Text: 078600 39967 / Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org) for children and young people who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or for anyone concerned for a young person that could be thinking about suicide.

Calm Harm

An app to help teenagers manage/resist the urge to self harm by providing a wide range of distraction techniques.

Combined Minds

This app contains psycho-education for parents, families & friends with practical advice on how to provide mental health support to children & young people.

Cove

A relaxing musical app that helps people try to capture their mood and express it by making music within the program and capturing it in a journal format. Note: you do not need to know how to play an instrument to use this app.

Stem4

www.stem4.org.uk

A charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers as well as encouraging them to build resilience and manage difficult emotions via online resources.

YoungMinds

www.youngminds.org.uk

A mental health charity that gives help and advice for young people, as well as encouraging them to get involved in fundraising/campaigning to raise awareness for children & young people's mental health.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

A charity that offers mental health support & information online for everyone. Their helpline is free and available to all ages. Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org 24/7.

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org/young-people

A site which has resources for young people who are grieving, as well as providing information & advice to families/professionals on how to best support a young person who is bereaved. A helpline is also available on 0800 028840.

Clear Fear

An app to help children & teenagers manage anxiety through distraction & helpful activities.

Calm

A mindfulness app that includes various relaxing sounds to listen to as well as "sleep stories" & some guided meditations.

Headspace

A mindfulness app that has more of a "podcast feel" to it with various talks, guided meditations and helpful videos available.

S

SHARE
RESPONSIBLY

We all love to share photographs, fun things we`re doing and much more.

Be careful what you share and always ask permission if somebody else is in the photo or video.

M

MANAGE
your PRIVACY

If you`re using apps that can communicate with others, turn on privacy.

Only let people you really know follow you unless you`ve asked permission from your parents.

A

ASK
for HELP

Don`t ever be worried about asking for help from someone you trust.

You will NOT be judged.

R

RESPECT
OTHERS

Be kind.

Other people may have different opinions from you.

That`s okay, but if they become abusive, take screenshots, block and report and tell an adult.

T

THINK
CRITICALLY

TRUST
your INSTINCT

Is it true?
Does that person really know me?
Has that really happened?

Always question!

If anything worries you,
or if you need help with something, speak out

#DITTO

STAY SAFE ● HAVE FUN ● REPEAT

EDITION 27 - DEC 2021

In this edition

www.esafety-adviser.com

Foreword from
Alan Mackenzie

Hi there, I'm Alan Mackenzie.

I'm an independent consultant specialising in online safety, specifically within education to children, young people, staff, charities and other organisations.

I'm a strong believer that technology, for the most part, is neutral; behaviour is the most important aspect.

To understand behaviour, we have to be a part of children's lives in order to understand what they're doing with technology and why.

We have to be curious and guide them to realise the wonderful opportunities that the online world gives to all of us, and be there to support them when they need it.

Contact Alan

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Where did 2021 go? I seem to be saying that more often as I get older. "Where did this week go?" is a common one right now.

But here we are, December 2021, so what has changed in the last year? A lot but not a lot. Confused? A lot has got worse, much worse, but not a lot has changed from the government or technology companies perspective, although to be fair there is some forward movement. Quite how that will pan out remains to be seen. Lots of talk doesn't always culminate in positive action.

I'll briefly talk about this at the beginning of this edition and then, for the rest, I want to go through some of the basics of online safety again. Especially at this time of year when children may be getting new technology, I think it's important that we remind ourselves of some of those basic principles which can often get lost in the confusing and fast-moving area of technology.

I have tried to include something for everyone so I hope you enjoy this edition and, until next year, I wish you and your family a wonderful, relaxing break.

Alan

Reflecting on 2021

It's often said that online safety is an ever-evolving, fast-moving area, and 2021 would definitely support that. There's no doubt that lockdown and the various restrictions had a huge negative effect on some serious issues such as child sexual exploitation, so I would like to have a quick reflection over the year to briefly see what has been going on and, what is (hopefully) being done to curb much of this. I'm not covering everything, just the aspects which give me the greatest concern and I have included some links (in **teal** colour) if you would like to read more.

Of particular concern is the sexual aspect and this takes many different forms, e.g.:

- Children and young people (particularly girls) being sent sexual content or individuals requesting sexual content.
- Artificial intelligence which is being used to 'nudify' women.
- Algorithms which show sexual content.
- Self-generated sexual content, including self-generated where a person has been groomed/coerced into taking and sharing.

With all of these and more we are seeing the statistics getting bigger. In early December a report was released showing that young people are unlikely to report receiving or being asked to take/share sexual content for a number of reasons, including the fact that they don't think

anything will be done about it (more on this later in the magazine).

Meanwhile the use of artificial intelligence technology continues to grow and much of this is good, but where there's good there is always bad, where AI is being used to nudify women. **Deepfakes** have been around for some time now and they're getting better, but so too is technology which is being used to change an image of a fully-clothed person and **turn it into a nude**. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that the vast majority of these images are of females which are then shared online.

Harassment against girls and violence against women is on the rise, much of this being fuelled online. Most people will be aware of the **Everyone's Invited** website and at the time of writing this article there were over 54,000 testimonies.

A couple of months ago the organization 5Rights Foundation released **new research** which showed that children are being targeted with sexual and other concerning content. To test the experiences of children the researchers created social media accounts based on a real child and reflected the behaviour of a child. The outcomes of this research revealed some stark results, e.g.:

• Within hours, the accounts were targeted with direct messages from adults offering pornography.
• The algorithms were serving suicide, self-harm, eating disorder and sexual content.

Within the research there is a statement which hammers home an important point:

"A child that tells their true age, however young, is offered content and experiences that in almost any other context would be illegal."

We know that misinformation and disinformation is increasing, not just related to Covid-19 but many other areas. We also know that scams, fraud and identity theft are on the increase as
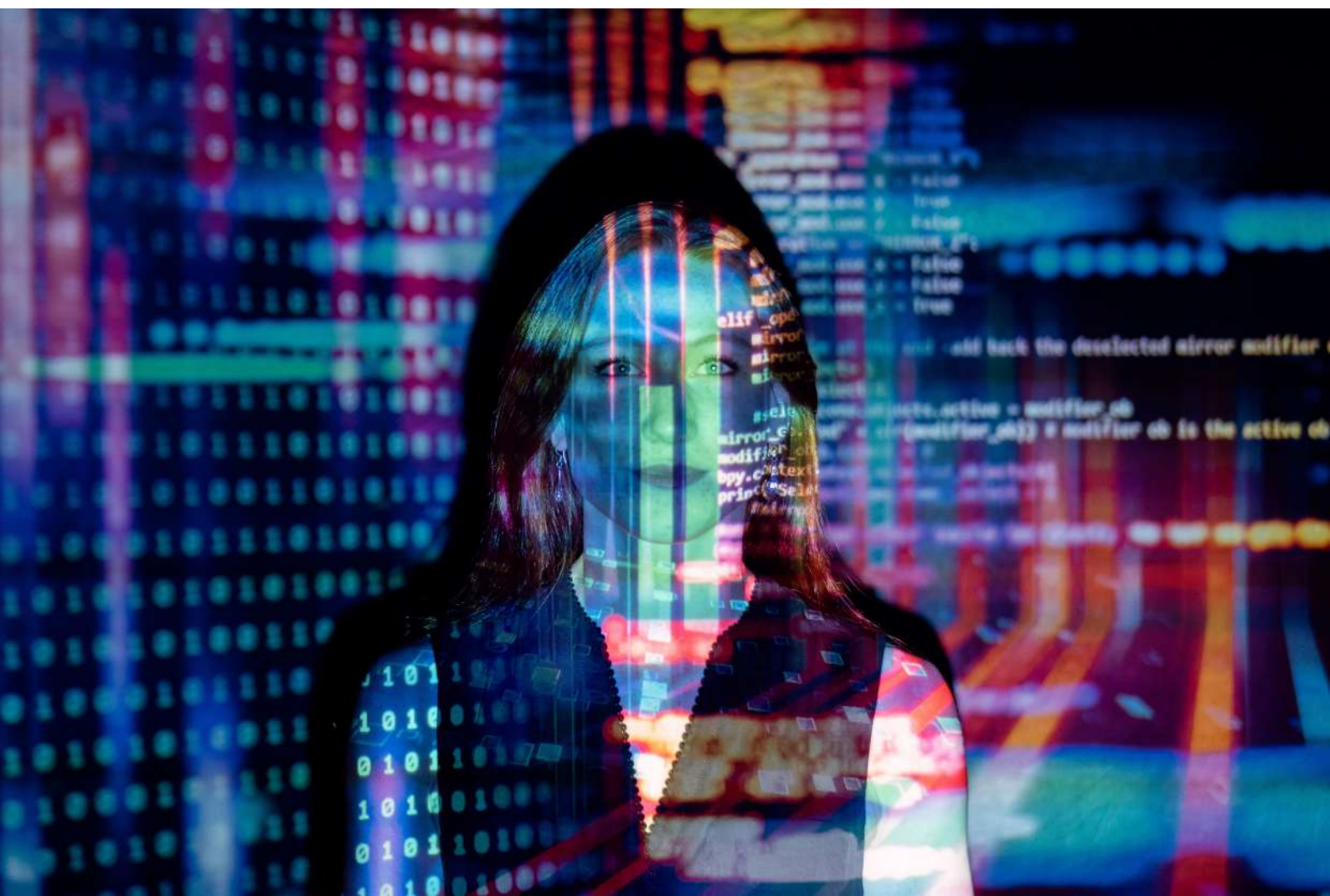
organised crime gangs use technology for their own illegal gains.

As I'm writing this article, at certain points I have stopped and had to think about what I put in and what I leave out. It might have been easier for me to write a brief paragraph and stated, "Everything has and is increasing." It's no wonder parents, schools and the children themselves are having difficulty, but there's only so much we can do, it sometimes feels that were just applying sticking plasters and that the whole responsibility, even as victims, lies with ourselves. At some point technology companies and governments around the world need to take meaningful action, not endless spin and meaningless policy statements. Are we starting to see light at the end of the tunnel?

The Online Safety Bill

I have written about this bill in past magazines, it has been under intense scrutiny by a joint parliamentary committee for several months in the latter part of this year and the bill is potentially groundbreaking, however there is concern from many that it is so big and so far reaching it could be significantly watered down once it reaches parliament. But there are also concerns from others that the bill doesn't go far enough.

What is the bill designed to do?

Briefly the bill mainly targets tech companies and imposes a legal duty of care. There are 3 main aspects:

- To prevent the spread of illegal content and activity, e.g. child abuse images, hate crimes.
- To protect children from harmful material.
- To protect adults from legal but harmful content.

Whilst those 3 points sound quite simple, they're really complex. For example, what is meant by harmful? Moving aside what is legal/illegal, how do you determine what is appropriate and

inappropriate? Something which may be appropriate for a 14 year old may not be appropriate for a 9 year old. A definition of what is legal but harmful is a tricky one and as yet I have not seen a clear definition.

The bill is largely aimed at tech companies who, in the past, have been woefully poor at self-regulation, promising much but delivering little in terms of safety and wellbeing. To be fair to the tech companies, it isn't their fault that we are seeing many of the issues, but it is their platform which delivers and exacerbates the issues and therefore have a moral and ethical duty of care to all users.

The new Secretary of State, Nadine Dorries, wants the bill to go much further, including introducing an option within the bill for technology executives to face prison if they fail to act. Quite how that would be enforced is anybody's guess but the fact that she is focussed and fighting is very positive.

But even now there are some glaring omissions which thankfully have been picked up by the scrutiny committee and reported to Parliament:

- Cyberflashing - where unsolicited sexual images and videos are sent to someone, e.g. via AirDrop. This is obviously a really concerning one as the image/video is often sent by someone who is in the immediate vicinity, which can cause emotional distress.Scam adverts which cause very significant financial and emotional harm to many individuals.
- Pornography and age verification. This is a particular concern given the free and easy access, and the fact that many (boys in particular) are using pornography as a means of sex education. Proper age verification was supposed to have been legally implemented a few years ago but it was dropped a couple of days before the Act was due to come into force due to 'administrative errors.' Since then, government has repeatedly stated it will be coming back in.

In the past few weeks, Germany has decided that pornography websites that do not apply effective age verification can be blocked. However this (as in the UK) relates to commercial pornography, in other words the content that has to be paid for to access. But there is a glimmer of hope in relation to freely available content not only on websites but on social media too. Because this content could be classed as 'user generated' it will (or should) fall within the scope of the Online Safety Bill. Fingers crossed!

- Anonymous abuse - where offenders hide behind anonymity in order to abuse others in a variety of ways.

The bill has a long way to go yet. Despite government promises it's unlikely we're going to see this new law coming out before 2023 but, remaining positive, at least action is finally being taken.

I've only scratched the surface, I didn't want this article to turn out to be some sort of doom and gloom scaremongering piece, but as you can see there is so much going on. I haven't even touched on other areas such as:

- The **Age Appropriate Design Code** which is a really positive legal step forward relating to how apps and online services are designed, as long as it is enforced properly..
- The Facebook whistleblower **Frances Haugen** who has revealed hugely concerning issues about the practices within Facebook and their related apps.
- And so much more.

2021 has been an interesting year and it doesn't look as though 2022 will slow down at all. Many of the issues are out of our control so what's important for us, the ordinary you and me, is that we keep ourselves up to date as much as we can and we do the very best for our children, because realistically that's all we can do and that's the purpose of this magazine, to give a little help.

Alan

Online Safety - The Basics
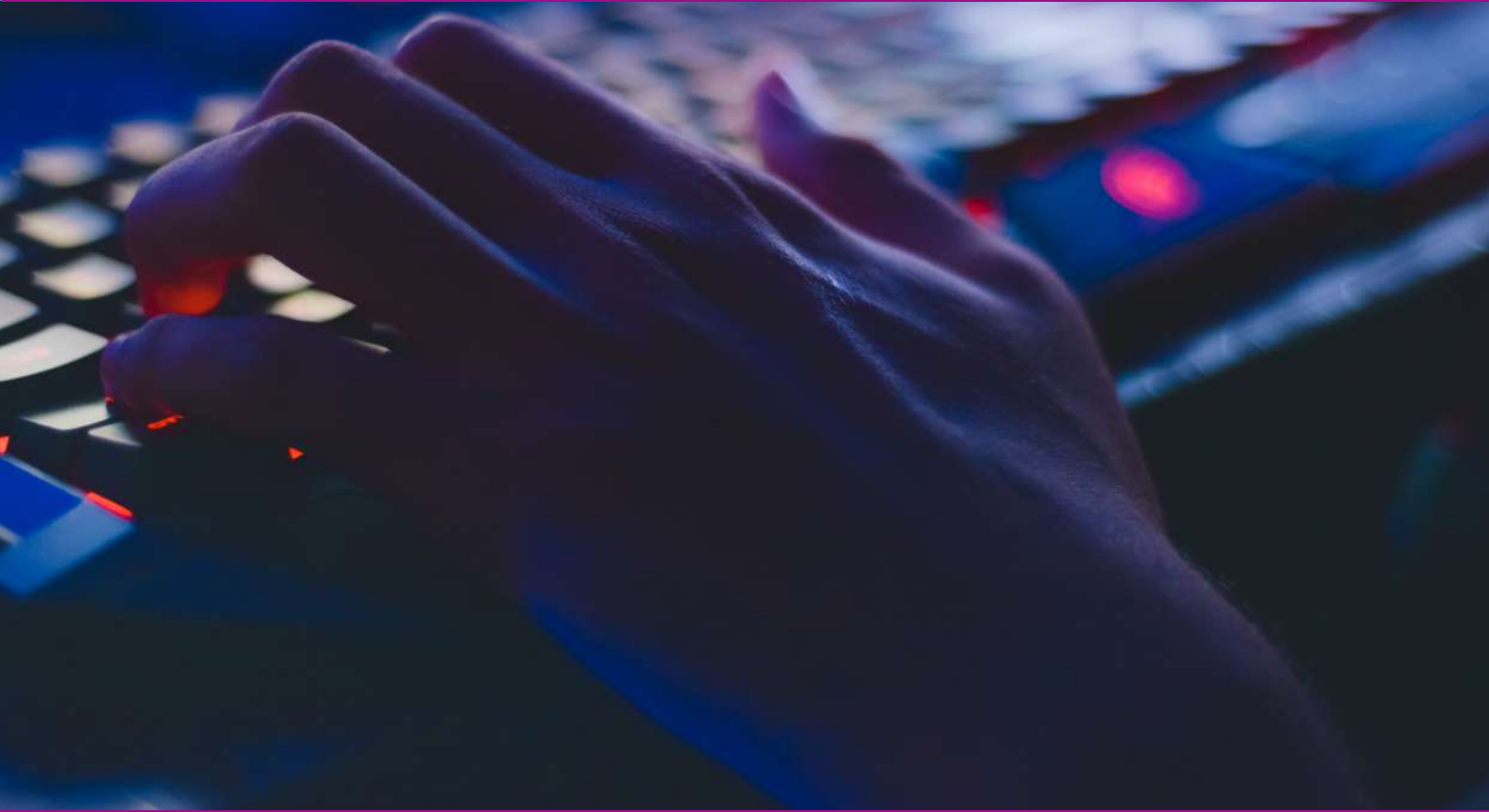
When it comes to online safety one thing is certain, the basic principles rarely change. These principles serve as the cornerstone for everything else, regardless of the technology, the game, the app or anything else.

In this section I'm going to cover some of these basics which, if nothing else, serve as a timely reminder.

Much of the advice I see is based on a one-size-fits-all solution, but there are two things wrong with that advice: firstly one piece of advice doesn't fit everyone and secondly there's no such thing as a solution.

When I get invited to a school to speak to parents I describe a concept called **Safe**, **Smart** and **Social**. These are loosely tied to age and this concept allows me to explain things in an age-appropriate way, whilst also allowing me to advise options (not solutions). Why not solutions? Because everyone is different: every child is different, every family is different. One piece of advice may fit one family but not another.

Safe - this is for very young children, 1 to 6 years, we keep these young children as safe as possible, what we commonly call the walled-garden approach. To use a good analogy, e.g. swimming, when we take them swimming the first few times we're in the shallow end with them, there's a lifeguard, the child has armbands on, we're nurturing and showing them what to do whilst having fun at the same time. In other words, we are mitigating every possible risk as much as possible.

This transfers to the online world really well: we have safeguards in place such as internet filters, we only allow pre-approved apps and games, we check out those apps and games before the child

uses them. We play with them and show them what to do if/when something goes wrong.

Smart - as children are growing up we need to start loosening restrictions very gradually. Smart is for children roughly 7 to 11 years. Again the swimming pool analogy works well: we take off those armbands and see how they get on, they're still in the shallow end and we're in the pool with them. They're learning, becoming more confident and stronger and eventually we can leave them in the pool, whilst still keeping a watchful eye on them and what they're doing.

Again, this analogy transfers online really well. We can't keep an eye on our children 24/7, as much as we might like to. They have to be able to grow up, we have to allow them to take risks (in a managed way), to find out what works, what doesn't and what to do if something goes wrong.

Social - this is the most difficult one of all. The Social concept is for those children moving through adolescence, roughly 11 years onwards. They're unlikely to want you at the swimming pool, they would rather be there with their friends and having fun. They'll take risks and push more boundaries. They might meet other people their own age and form relationships, that's a natural part of growing up. At this stage restrictions need to be lifted even more as they get older, they need the freedom to explore, have privacy, take risks, push those boundaries, because if they can't they're unlikely to be able to build resilience, and resilience-building is fundamental to growing up.

In my talks with parents I go into more detail but hopefully you can see the basic principle. But there's one overriding point which I think is the most important of all:

Whatever freedoms a child has, it is at the comfort level of the parent, not the child, regardless of their age.

Children can appear to be tech-savvy but this is a smokescreen, tech-savvy does not mean risk aware. So what do we mean by risk?

It would be impossible to go through all the risks and there's no such thing as a list of all the risks. To simplify this we use what is commonly called the 4 C's: content, contact, conduct and commercialism.

These 4 C's are really useful for many reasons:

- They are simple to understand.
- You don't have to know every risk and issue.
- They allow you to consider and investigate the potential concerns.
- They can be used as conversation starters with children

CONTENT - if a child is allowed to play this game, download this app, use an online service, what can they see, what content are they subjected to? Are there filters we can use? Are there age restrictions?

CONTACT - when they are using their technology, playing games, using apps, who are they talking to? Are you happy with this? Can you turn chat off? Are there any block/report features?

CONDUCT - this describes the behaviour of the child. If allowed to use play this game, use this app, how will they behave?

COMMERCIALISM - the internet, all the apps, games and services are driven by commercialism. Many of these services are free, but they have to make money somehow. We're all used to ads and the fact our data is farmed in order to show us targeted and relevant ads, but commercialism also includes scams, identity theft, fraud etc.

New Devices for Xmas?

Many children and young people will be excited about getting new devices for Xmas.

The holidays are a time of joy and being together, and if your children are receiving new devices it's also a perfect time to talk to them about safe and appropriate use.

Whether it's a new device, a new game, a new app or anything else, the principles mentioned in the preceding pages are much the same.

Technology can often be used as a tool to protect children but technology is NEVER a solution, this is marketing spin which can lead to a false sense of security. Protective technology is just a tool, and like any other tool it can be manipulated and bypassed. This tool has to work in conjunction with other tools, for example:

- Education, at school and at home.
- Awareness and keeping up to date.
- Vigilance and curiosity.
- Talking with our children, which is the most important of all.

All of these tools have to work together in order to protect our children as much as possible. We have to remember that the internet, games, apps etc. are rarely designed with younger children in mind, and often not with older children in mind (even with the common age restriction being 13 years). Predominantly, they're designed to make money.

So what technology tools are available to us?

Technology Tools

There are so many different devices, features within apps and games, filters and much more, I don't want this section to go into detail, that would be impossible. Rather I want to point you in the right direction to what I believe are the best resources available to you so that you can make the right choices for your family and your household.

The best way to think about this is to think in stages - your house, the devices, apps and games.

House

There's a good chance that you have a broadband line coming into your house in which all the incoming and outgoing data passes. All broadband providers enable you to filter the content that comes in via a broadband (internet) filter. Modern filters are really good, allowing you to choose what is or is not appropriate and many allow you to set up profiles, so that you can have a different level of filtering (or no filtering at all) for particular persons in the house (e.g. adults and children) or even different devices. All the filters I know of are completely free and usually all you need to do is to log into your broadband account and enable the filter.

Devices

Different devices work in different ways and have different features. For example gaming stations, phones, tablets, PC's Macs, smart devices such as smart speakers and more. This can make it difficult if you're not used to finding your way around technology settings, particularly as some of them are not very user-friendly.

But the features that are available can be really useful, such as preventing in-game purchases, preventing downloading age-inappropriate games, allowing or disallowing chat and much more.

Apps and Games

This is often the difficult one. Some of the features that are available are quite similar, e.g. blocking and reporting. Some are completely different and in some apps and games they are non-existent. I have reviewed many hundreds of apps and games in my time and it is disappointingly rare to find good, effective parental controls. This is changing, very slowly, but there's still a long way to go.

The 4 C's

This is where the 4 C's really come into their own. Consider the technology that is within your home and who has access to that technology. Which devices does your child have access to and are there appropriate safeguards on that technology?

House - have you enabled the internet filter and set appropriate 4C restrictions in relation to the age of your child?
Devices - have you set device restrictions?
Apps and games - do you and your child know what features are available within the apps and games they are using? This could be inappropriate language filters, blocking and reporting features and other parental controls.

Where to go for more practical information.

As basic as this is, it can still get very confusing. Thankfully there is help at hand. On the Internet Matters page HERE there is a full guide which will take you through all the features that are available on all your devices and how to set them up. There is also a 'Safe Checklist' which is really useful.
For advice about the features in apps and games take a look at Common Sense Media HERE and search on that app/game.

REMEMBER - technology is just a tool, not a solution to protect children.

Internet Matters are continually putting out incredibly useful information and resources for parents, one of which is The Online Together Project.

A common concern is how do you strike up conversations about certain topics with children? It's a very understandable concern, particularly if you don't know a lot about a topic, and that's where The Online Together Project can help.

It is designed to help children (6+), parents and carers to develop their critical thinking skills, encouraging a positive and inclusive culture online by:

• Helping children to be prepared and respond to experiences they may encounter online.
• Encourage confidence using technology regardless of background.

The first phase of the project looks at tackling gender stereotype. It's an interactive tool can be used alone, together with their peers, in the classroom or at home with parents and carers.

Essentially the tool is a quiz, but it's more than that. You start by picking your age (6-10, 11-13, 14+), the number of players and whether you are playing with an adult. You then get to choose an avatar and start the quiz.

After each answered question you will be informed if the answer was correct, which is then followed by a 'What you need to know" section, advice for parents and carers and further questions to discuss.

It's a wonderful addition by Internet Matters and I'm sure many parents will find it useful. I would also add that I think it could be really useful in the classroom to strike up conversations, discussion and debate.

https://www.internetmatters.org/the-online-together-project/

Online Sexual Harassment

Young people's rates of reporting online sexual harassment and abuse are 'shockingly low'.

At the beginning of December 2021, University College London (UCL) Institute of Education in collaboration with others released a new study which shows a concerning fact: young people aged 12 to 18 who receive or are asked to share sexual images are unlikely to report to their school, to parents or to social media platforms with many young people, particularly girls, reporting that the practice is 'normalised'.

Why don't they report? Because they don't think anything will be done, fear of victim blaming or that reporting will make matters worse.

The study involved 480 young people across the UK in which:

• 51% who received unwanted sexual content or had their image shared reported doing nothing about it.
• Of those who did do something, 25% told a friend, 17% report the matter to the social media platform, but only 5% reported to their parents and 2% to their school.

Quite often people think that this is older males who are harassing young girls but over the years things have changed significantly. It is entirely possible that this harassment is coming from known males, including males in the girls peer groups.

Within the report there are 5 key findings:

1. Social media enables much of this abuse, e.g. Snapchat and the use of shout-outs, streaks, score points, no age verification measures and Instagram through direct messages and group chat.
2. Sexual harassment overwhelmingly impacts girls. Girls feel under pressure, disgusted, embarrassed and confused.
3. Abuse is often influenced by gender norms. Boys are rewarded for sharing images of girls in some sort of masculinity status whereas girls are shamed and victim-blamed.
4. Young people will rarely report image-based abuse due to very little relevant and useful support.
5. There is a need for more effective and age-appropriate sex education. We're starting to see this with more updated PSHE, Relationships Education and Sex and Relationships Education in schools, but many of these areas are very new to teachers.

The fact that many girls are reporting this as 'normal' is concerning in itself and this is just a part of the wider concerns around the harassment and violence against women reporting that we're seeing.

Easy access to pornography, content-driven algorithms, marketing, lack of education around areas such as consent and respect, poorly designed apps and even worse reporting features where action is rarely taken. All of these and more have their part to play which makes this an enormously difficult challenge, but this challenge has to start at home where we help, guide and support our children, which includes those important conversations around what is right and what is wrong, even if those conversations are difficult ones to have.

Support and Guidance

Ensure your child (over 13) is aware of the Report Harmful Content service which you can find **HERE** and the Gurls Out Loud website **HERE**.

Use the AskTheAwkward resources from CEOP to strike up those difficult conversations **HERE**.

You can read more and download the full report from UCL **HERE**.

How can I......?

This section gives links to advice and guidance to common questions I am asked.

How can I find out what features are available to protect my child when playing Roblox?

Roblox is a wonderful world of adventure played by millions of children, young people and adults around the world and there are various features that can be enabled/disabled such as chat, privacy, reporting abuse etc.

There is a really useful parent guide, produced by the UK Safer Internet Centre **HERE**.

I know my teenage son/daughter won't always talk to me about things, how can I give them advice about reporting content?

There is a relatively new service available called 'Report Harmful Content' where a person (13-18) can report certain content and get help to have that content removed. Take a look yourself to see what can be reported and discuss the service with your teenager. You can find the RHC website **HERE**.

How can I talk to my child about personal information, what to share and what not to share online?

Personal information and being careful about what you share is one of the fundamental learning objectives for any child, young person and adult for a host of different reasons. There's a really useful little guide for you on the ThinkUKnow website **HERE**.

How can I make gaming safer for my child?

Gaming is hugely popular with children for many good reasons but as we all know, it comes with risks and issues. What are skins and loot boxes? Should my child be chatting with others? How do you know what is appropriate?

See **HERE** for a gaming guide and **HERE** for a guide to in-game chat.

How can I set up the new devices I have bought my child so that they are safer?

There are so many devices, each with individual settings it can be really hard for parents, but setting up devices before they are given to children is a really important step. You can see a guide to parental controls and help for setting up devices **HERE**.

How can I set up YouTube so that the content is appropriate for their age?

In the past there was only one level of filtering, called restricted mode. In 2021 YouTube introduced 3 levels of filtering which give parents further choice about what is appropriate for their child. Called 'Supervised Experience' you can see a useful guide **HERE** and don't forget YouTube Kids for younger children.

How can I......?

How can I talk to my teenager about online relationships?

It can be difficult for many different reasons to talk to children and young people about their online activities. For many, online is where relationships start. The education team at CEOP have produced some great resources for parents called AskTheAwkward which will help, you can find them **HERE**.

My teenage daughter has been receiving requests for nude images. How can I help her?

This behaviour is abhorrent and sometimes very difficult to investigate for many reasons, such as anonymity from the sender. The Internet Watch Foundation and Childline have put together a handy website with some facts and tips which you can find **HERE**.

My son/daughter is spending too much time online. How can I get them to spend less time on their devices?

Whilst time is important, what they are doing is more important. Spending 5 hours watching cat videos isn't the same as spending 5 hours learning something new and socialising with their friends. For some handy screen time tips and advice take a look **HERE**.

I know the basics of online grooming but I would like to know more. How can I learn more about it and how can I protect my child?

Grooming is the act of establishing a relationship in order to form a trusting relationship. Often it is talked about in relation to sexual grooming but it's much more than that, it can also be other criminal activity such as drug mules etc. To find out more take a look **HERE**.

I have no interest in social media but my children do. How can I learn more?

Social media in particular is a fast-moving area with new apps coming out all the time. You don't need to keep updated with all the apps out there, but you do need to be aware of the ones your children are using. See **HERE** for more advice about safe use, benefits, concerns and much more.

I have no interest in gaming but my son is never off Fortnite. I would like to learn more so that I can be more aware, how can I do this?

Gaming is hugely popular and for many children it is a primary way of socialising and staying in touch with their friends. But it comes with risks, so it's good to increase your knowledge which you can do **HERE**.

Andy Robertson is the editor of AskAboutGames and has written for national press and broadcast about video games and families for over 15 years. He has just published the Taming Gaming book with its Family Video Game Database.

Video games are often considered a distraction from education or something that parents and teachers need to minimise to avoid them getting out of hand. We hear lots of stories about children addicted to violent games and are understandably concerned.

However, video games are media. Like books and films and music, children need help finding an experience that is both appropriate and enjoyable to them.

Created by a small enthusiastic team of parents and carers The Family Video Game Database was set-up to help parents and teachers find games they actually want children to play. You can look up games like Grand Theft Auto or Call of Duty to check their ratings. But then get suggestions of younger rated games as an alternative for younger children.

The database also offers lists of useful games that you can filter by System, Age, Duration etc:
(Click on the yellow text to be taken straight to the web page).

- **Educational Games**
- **Walk in Someone Else's Shoes**
- **Solve a Mystery**
- **Find Calm**

The database is also backed by a hardback book **Taming Gaming** that is available on Amazon and elsewhere. Both have been created by journalist Andy Robertson who has worked with video games and families for over 15 years.

www.taminggaming.com

If you're not aware of Meta, essentially it's the new name given by Facebook and their family of other apps (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook Messenger) whilst they transition into the new 'meta age.' All this means is that they are getting more involved in virtual reality, they see this as the future, the 'metaverse'. Some readers may remember Second Life, it was much the same thing but never really went anywhere, but we're in a different time now and whenever Facebook does something they do it big.

But increasingly Facebook (Meta) have been under intense scrutiny, not least of which is because of the whistleblower **Frances Haugen** and the tens of thousands of documents she leaked showing hugely concerning practices at Facebook.

Equally, Meta and other technology companies are coming under increasing scrutiny and legislation in regards to their platforms, content, algorithms and more (see the Online Safety Bill)

Recently Meta has announced some significant changes that are coming to Instagram. Titled "Raising the Standard for Protecting Teens and Supporting Parents" where they state they will:

- Take a stricter approach to what is recommended to teens.
- They will stop people from tagging or mentioning teens that don't follow them.
- Teens will be 'nudged' towards different topics if they've been dwelling on one topic for a long time.
- They are launching a **'Take a Break'** feature.
- And they are launching tools for parents to see how much time their teens spend on Instagram and set time limits, plus a new educational hub for parents.

These changes are very welcome, my only disappointment is that it has taken so long and it will be interesting to see if other companies follow suit.

You can read more about the changes **HERE** which should be coming early 2022.
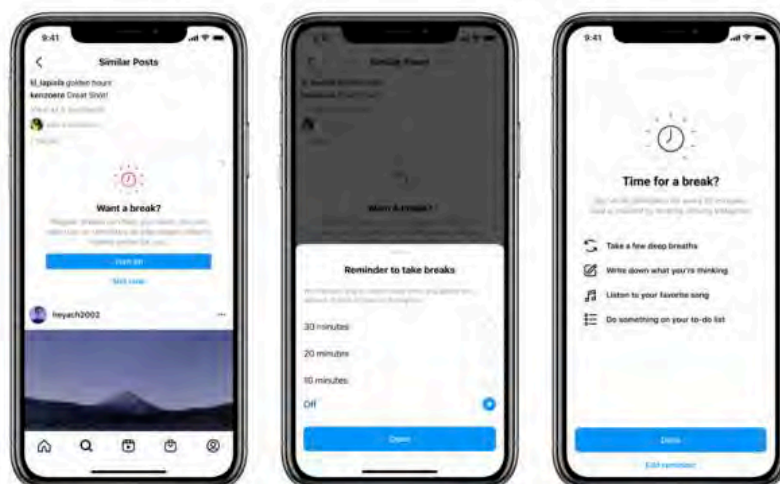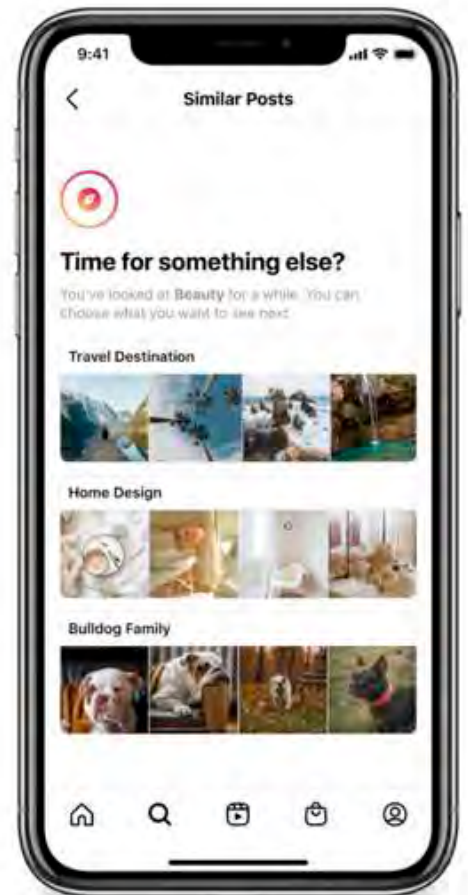
Family Safety Mode and Screentime Management

TikTok is going from strength to strength, their user base doesn't seem to be slowing down at all and for most users it's a fun, interactive, social platform. But as with any user-to-user content-driven media it doesn't come without risks

Historically, social media platforms have been quite slow in their response to public concerns and, although there is still much they can do, TikTok do seem to be responding with new features quite quickly in order to make the platform more appropriate.

Account Privacy

By default, all new accounts for children under the age of 16 are set to private by default. This is a relatively new feature and only applies to new accounts, so it's worth checking the account your child uses to see whether it is public or private.

Suggest Your Account to Others

As with account privacy, this is turned off by default for under 16's, but again it is worth checking as it can be easily turned on.

Direct Messages

Private messaging is a feature of most social media but within TikTok you have to be over 16 to use DM's. As a parent you can turn this on/off through Family Pairing, which I will mention on the following page.

Family Pairing

Family Pairing allows parents to customise the safety settings according to the needs of the child and there are 8 features available.

Screen time management

This is where you can decide how long your child can spend on TikTok each day.

Restricted Mode

You can restrict content that may not be appropriate to the age of the user.

Search

You can either allow or disallow your child to search for content, people, hashtags or sounds.

Discoverability

This simply means whether the account is public or private, which you can manage. By default it is turned off for under 16's.

Suggest account to others

Decide whether your child's account can be recommended to others or not.

Liked Videos

You can decide who can view the videos your child liked

Comments

You can decide who can comment on your child's videos.

Direct messages

Otherwise known as private messaging, you can limit who can send messages to the connected account or turn DM's off completely. DM's are turned off by default for users under 16.

Linking Accounts

1. Tap Profile in the bottom right.
2. Tap the 3-line icon top right.
3. Go to Family Pairing.
4. Tap Parent or Teen.
5. Follow the instructions.

Family Pairing Controls

1. Tap Profile in the bottom right.
2. Tap the 3-line icon in the top right.
3. Go to Family Pairing.
4. Select the account you want to manage.
5. Update the controls.

TikTok has a number of useful guides for users and parents in their Resource Centre such as a wellbeing guide, new user guide, guardian's guide and more. Well worth a look if you're new to this:

http://bit.ly/tiksafety

Contribute to the magazine

I'm always on the lookout for great content to share with schools and parents, but I also know that people have their own individual stories to tell. This information can be hugely beneficial for everybody.

- Are you a parent who has experienced something with your child? What was it and what did you do? Has your child experienced something and would he/she like to share their advice with others?

- Are you a school that has experienced a series of incidents? How did you tackle this? Do you have an innovative way to engage with specific online safety topics in the school?

- Do you have an opinion or a thought-provoking idea?

Drop me an email and let me know your thoughts. Everything can be kept anonymous if you wish.

Alan Mackenzie

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Digital Parenting

10 years helping families enjoy a happier, safer digital life

by **vodafone**

Welcome to Digital Parenting:
your family's guide to a smart life with tech

Catherine Russell
Head of Sustainable Business

Sharing music instantly, sending uplifting Instagram posts and swapping silly Snapchat-filtered photos are all regular occurrences in my family, as I'm sure they are in many others. But "Can I show you something funny on TikTok?" is a phrase I can't imagine ever saying to my mum when I was a teenager.

Because the world of parenting has changed completely in a single generation through the advent of digital technology.

We're celebrating the 10th anniversary of our Digital Parenting magazine – a huge anniversary that marks a decade-long commitment by Vodafone to helping parents and carers navigate the unchartered waters of raising kids against a backdrop of rapidly evolving tech. We've distributed almost nine million magazines to schools and parents over that period.

I've been involved with the magazine for the past five years and, as a parent myself, have found the process of bringing it to life both cathartic and informative. It's so wonderful to know each of us isn't alone in not being able to keep up with the latest trends – the number of eye-rolls I get from my kids over dinner is staggering!

I'm deeply grateful that I've had the benefit of raising my children whilst also working on a programme that helps me figure things out as I go. I'll always make mistakes as a parent – but that's OK, we're all learning and finding our way through together. That's what Digital Parenting is all about.

I hope you find this edition useful – let us know what you think by tweeting **@VodafoneUK**.

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10 years of Digital Parenting

What are kids talking about?
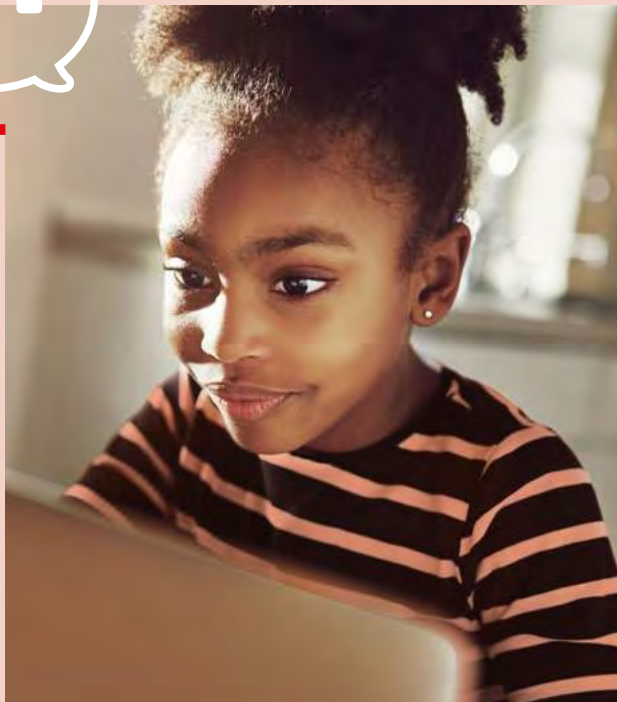
As an online safety organisation, it's been fascinating for us at Digital Awareness UK to see just how much our relationships with technology have changed since the start of COVID-19. We've learned how to work, learn, socialise, shop, entertain ourselves and much, much more in ways that would have been unrecognisable pre-pandemic.

Having spoken to young people throughout this time, it's been remarkable to discover how well they've adapted to this ever-changing digital landscape. And for parents, it's been just as remarkable to see the speed at which they've adapted to keep their children safe online amid the challenges of remote working, intermittent quarantines and the general uncertainty many of us still feel.

As the digital world continues to evolve for our children, we as parents must continue to evolve with it. With that in mind, here's a breakdown of trends we're seeing in schools for parents to be mindful of, so they are best equipped to ensure that their children can safely enjoy all the fantastic benefits technology has to offer.

10 years of Digital Parenting

In 2012, a quarter of kids aged 8-12 had a profile on MySpace and Bebo… RIP Foursquare!

Early years trend: Independent use increasing

With many of us parents juggling remote working with busy family lives, children are spending more and more time using devices independently. A trend that we have seen as a result is that preschool-aged children are increasingly being exposed to harmful content that may be sexual, violent, include bad language, or otherwise be inappropriate. This happens most often when young children are left alone using video streaming platforms, in particular.

So what should I do? Parental controls are a fantastic tool for parents of very young children, to help filter out inappropriate content (please go to **Vodafone News Centre** for advice on parental controls). We recommend teaching children from a young age that it's not their fault if they unintentionally come across upsetting content online, and that the most important thing is that they come and talk to their parents for support.

Primary school trend: Rules relaxed

We have noted a marked increase in the number of children using social media, messaging apps and games rated for a much older audience at our primary schools. According to research from the Office for National Statistics, half of parents said they had had to relax rules about what their child did online during the first lockdown, and from the conversations we're having, it seems many parents are yet to revert to pre-pandemic rules.

Many parents have faced pressure to ensure their children are entertained and socialised since the start of the pandemic, perhaps allowing them to have a social media account earlier than planned. Sadly, while this has many benefits, we've spoken to numerous children who've experienced issues such as online bullying and grooming when using these sorts of platforms at such a young age.

So what should I do? Remind yourself of the age restrictions across social media platforms and messaging apps as well as PEGI (Pan European Game Information) ratings for video games. It can be helpful to use these as a guide, but by no means can they be relied upon to prevent someone underage from accessing digital platforms. If your child is using social media, messaging apps or games rated for older users at primary school age and you aren't feeling confident that they are fully aware of the risks, it may be time to rethink the boundaries you have in place and have an open conversation about some of your concerns.

Secondary school trend: Digital awareness is soaring

It's been incredible to see the extent to which secondary-school aged children's digital awareness has grown in the last year. We believe that a number of things may have contributed to this, namely the fact that digital news is now dominating our headlines, with a constant stream of information about everything from racism on social media during Euro 2021 through to the Everyone's Invited sexual harassment movement. This has generated lots of debate about how young people can best protect themselves and treat others online. In addition, digital issues such as online scams and misinformation have spread like wildfire over the past year, making us all alive to the fact that we have to think very carefully before believing anything we see online.

While their digital awareness is increasing, teens are being exposed to a tsunami of wonderful and extremely challenging experiences online and parents often only learn as much about their digital lives as they want us to know.

So what should I do? Having conversations with children about their digital lives (we recommend that parents do this little and often) is critical if we are to share the struggles and joys of their lives online. If you want to arm yourself with the latest digital trends to help guide those conversations in an informed way, visit **Vodafone News Centre**.

> " **DIGITAL ISSUES SUCH AS ONLINE SCAMS AND MISINFORMATION HAVE SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE OVER THE PAST YEAR, MAKING US ALL ALIVE TO THE FACT THAT WE HAVE TO THINK VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE BELIEVING ANYTHING WE SEE ONLINE. "

EMMA ROBERTSON is Director and Co-Founder of online safety agency Digital Awareness UK

Safety by numbers

Technology changes even faster than our children do, so it's important to keep up with the most appropriate safety settings. Getting the balance right between giving children the freedom to learn, socialise and play, and ensuring that they are kept safe can be tricky.

Here are tips for each age group:

Toddlers

You can activate safety features starting with the settings on your broadband, so that a password must be entered before content is shown.

Toddler profiles on shared devices can feature bookmarks and apps. Try the YouTube Kids app, which ensures that your toddler will not accidentally discover videos with adult themes, and a child-friendly search engine such as Google's Kiddle or its Microsoft equivalent, WackySafe.

In a pinch, enable airplane mode so they play offline.

Primary years

Online safety at this age is about who children are contacting as well as what they are seeing.

Apps like Google's FamilyLink or Qustodio (free on up to five devices) give you complete visibility on everything your child views and whom they contact.

Children are likely to request access to social networks and games with chat functions. Check the PEGI rating (like a film rating for games) as well as the recommended age range before letting them sign up. Adding a parental pin and locking down the chat settings so they can only chat with known friends is vital too, as well as disabling in-app purchases to prevent bill shock.

Tweens

Many music and video sharing apps have a 13+ age restriction, but that won't stop today's hyper-connected tweens from requesting them.

For parents who allow their tweens onto social media, safety stipulations should include ensuring accounts are private. Time limits should be set on the device itself, and also on individual apps and games.

Most important: keep talking through issues tweens encounter, from images of airbrushed perfection to online bullying.

Teens

Discussions around digital wellbeing, screen breaks and the effects of social media will be relevant in the teen years.

Personal devices have become conduits for learning as well as play for all of us, but it is vital to know when to switch off. Individual time limits on apps can help, as can the stipulation that social media accounts can be private, not open.

While apps like Forest can encourage downtime and help teens focus on things like school revision, make sure Snap Maps is operating in ghost mode, so they aren't sharing their location.

Digital inclusion

How tech is transforming lives

As we emerge into a world irrevocably changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, giving everyone access to technology is more important than ever if we are to deal with the inequalities that have worsened during this period.

R epeated UK lockdowns led to an acceleration in our use of technology, but many people were left behind. Figures from charity Age UK show that 42% of over-75s do not use the internet, while the Government's Children's Commissioner says that 9% of families with children do not have a laptop, desktop or tablet at home, and so were unable to access online learning.

Post pandemic, ensuring digital inclusion will be more important than ever, as the rapid acceleration of technology means that those who do not have digital access are even more likely to be left behind.

Making work more accessible

During the pandemic, some marginalised groups have benefited from increased use of technology, which has broken down the barriers that have stopped them from accessing work or learning.

Joe Martin, who is the Managing Director for Digital Inclusion for disability charity Leonard Cheshire, says that the shift to remote working using technology has allowed those with disabilities to do a lot more, as they do not have to physically attend a workplace, and can use customised software such as speech recognition programme Dragon, and Claro software for the visually impaired.

"Because of the technology, people with disabilities are seeing a more level playing field," he says.

Figures from Unison, the public service union, show that nearly three quarters of disabled staff felt they were more productive or as

9%

OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE A LAPTOP, DESKTOP OR TABLET AT HOME, AND SO WERE UNABLE TO ACCESS ONLINE LEARNING.

productive working from home compared to their pre-lockdown place of work. More than half (54%) felt they would benefit from working from home in the future but nearly two in five (37%) believed their employer was unlikely to allow this.

Opening up skills and careers training

Technology can also be a social equaliser for the homeless and other disadvantaged groups.

Alex Stephany, founder and CEO of social enterprise Beam, says that the falling price of smartphones gives us "a historic opportunity".

"At Beam, we provide our beneficiaries with smartphones, laptops and WiFi dongles," he says. "This enables them to complete online training courses, apply for jobs and help their kids with schoolwork."

These devices and connectivity are necessary to replace hubs that once provided access to technology for the disadvantaged but have not been available due to the pandemic.

"Before, people could rely on public libraries or day centres to access the internet, COVID-19 closed down many of these services," Alex says.

10 years
of Digital Parenting

In 2014, only 3.9% of people in the UK were WFH. Now it's 44%.

▶▶

Vodafone's Great British Tech Appeal similarly aims to help families who are not able to connect with remote schooling and other opportunities by collecting and redistributing used smartphones, tablets and laptops, along with free data, to the people that need them most.

Allowing those with other responsibilities to work remotely

Remote work has been a double-edged sword for many of those with caring responsibilities throughout the pandemic, who faced homeschooling and working at the same time.

However, if remote working is to remain a part of many of our lives now, increased access to tech at home will give everyone the chance of a more equal future. For example, a study from the University of Kent found that working from home allowed women to stay in jobs after the birth of their first child, and meant they were less likely to need to reduce working hours.

Before the crisis, homeworkers were less likely to be promoted and were paid less than their counterparts in the office, a situation that may be set to change as hybrid working becomes more of a standard work pattern.

What happens next?

As we open up society after the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the key will be to balance the technological breakthroughs that have helped those who have previously felt marginalised with a return to the aspects of work and education that we have all missed.

Beam's Alex Stephany says that the most interesting ways in which technology will develop to help with social equality will be those that fuse human interaction with data and software.

"Technology alone is not going to be the answer to all of our problems. It's going to be a combination of technology and human-based, personalised services," he says.

But for many, the first step will be getting hold of devices and a reliable internet connection in the first place.

"Access to devices and an internet connection can be a barrier for many disadvantaged people," Alex adds. "Digital exclusion during lockdown has been incredibly disempowering."

Vodafone has launched everyone.connected, a campaign to connect one million people as part of its long-term commitment to tackling digital exclusion.

If you have used, working devices that could help others, please donate them to the Great British Tech Appeal. If you need help for you or your family, visit our website to see which charities we're working with, or reach out to your local charity which may have some form of connectivity to give out from our charities.connected programme.

Learn more at vodafone.co.uk/everyone-connected

How digital changed the world

10 years of Digital Parenting

Ten years ago, when this magazine was first printed, parents were shifting away from friends and family for parenting advice and turning firmly to their online communities. In the decade since, we have learnt much about ourselves through our digital lives. Where a decade ago mothers might have set reminders on their mobiles to breastfeed at intervals, now we chart every moment of our children's lives digitally – from photo album organisation to getting most of our medical advice not from village elders or our mums, but in the middle of the night from the internet. And then there's education, for us and for the kids. Where will the next decade take us? You, as parents, are in charge of that. **But first, let's consider how we got here.**

2011: The blossoming of parent power online

Instagram, Facetime and the iPad were all launched in 2010. That year, the General Election was labelled 'the Mumsnet election' after the main parties ran adverts on the parenting site (as it was celebrating its 10th birthday) in recognition of the platform's power and, by extension, that of mothers'.

2014: Dr Google will see you now

The search engine revealed that new and expectant parents conducted twice as many Google searches as non-parents. "Universally (and unsurprisingly), 'health' is the top concern, but we can even see differences there depending on stage," said Google analysts. "Expectant and new parents are especially interested in 'weight,' whereas 'fever' is the top concern at the toddler phase."

2015: Finding your tribe on social

Founded in 2004, by 2015 Facebook was the world's largest social network with 1.5 billion users. That year, Pew Research found that almost three-quarters of online parents were using the site. Seventy-five per cent of these logged on daily, 51 per cent did so several times a day.

Online mothers were more likely than online fathers to use the social media site (81 per cent vs. 66 per cent). They were also twice as likely to use Pinterest, and a little more likely to use Instagram (30 per cent vs. 19 per cent of fathers).

Seventy-nine per cent felt they got useful parenting information from their social media networks. Almost three-quarters of the parents on social media agreed that they received support on the platforms, while half of the mothers on social media said they had received 'social or emotional support' about a parenting issue from their network over the previous month.

2015: Shopping at a click

Halfway through the 2010s, parents woke up to the time-saving potential of online shopping. One survey of the UK, Germany, Spain and USA found that British mothers were leading the way – 64 per cent said they purchased online on a daily to weekly basis, compared to an average 41 per cent in the other three countries. In fact, 37 per cent of British mothers now preferred to buy things online rather than in-store, the highest rate across the surveyed countries.

2016: YouTube became your parenting guru

Nearly a decade after its launch, a Google/Ipsos survey found that 72 per cent of millennial parents were using YouTube with the aim of making more informed purchases for their children. The same percentage used the site to "stay in the know" about their children's worlds. Meanwhile 86 per cent of millennial fathers were turning to YouTube for guidance on parenting topics. 62 per cent sought out parenting tips, 59 per cent information about their baby's health, 55 per cent watched product reviews and 46 per cent had watched content about pregnancy and baby development.

2017: Mobile Mums

By January 2017, usage data indicated that parents had made another important change to their digital habits. UK-based mothers aged between 25 and 54 now accessed the internet from a smartphone 59 per cent of the time. By comparison, women in the same age bracket who didn't have children were more likely to access the internet from a computer. Lighter, more accessible, and easier to use with one hand while carrying a baby in the other, smartphones were now also more popular with fathers than other men.

2017: 'Appy families

In 2017, Apple picked Parent Tech as a 'trend of the year', reflecting the rapid rise in apps designed to make parenting easier, more scientific or just a little more fun. Google data revealed that 'searches for parenting/family-related apps,' such as "allowance and chores app for kids" and "brushing teeth app for kids free" had grown 65 per cent since the previous year. It was only four years since the very first app was downloaded, but now 75 per cent of parents with app-enabled devices were sharing them with their children, while over a third of British parents saw them as an integral part of their family life.

2018: Socialising (offline and on)

The group messaging app Whatsapp hit 1.5 billion global users at the end of 2017. Soon, it seemed as if every school-gate conversation had migrated onto a smartphone screen, allowing parents to share questions about World Book Day costumes and teachers' leaving presents from the office or at home, at any time.

Meanwhile, babysitting apps were booming among parents keen to be liberated to socialise offline. Apps such as Bambino, Bubble and UrbanSitter enabled parents to access a network of local babysitters in seconds and book them from their phones. Another, called Sitters, said the number of people using their service had grown by 65 per cent in just three years.

2018: Self-diagnosis by social media

By 2018, around 90 per cent of parents were searching for health information online. According to one study, published in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, 29 per cent of parents used online parenting forums, while 27 per cent

used social media to gather information about their child's health. Yet only 29 per cent thought the information they found online was correct, and just 61 per cent understood it.

2019: Tracking our teens

As the end of the decade approached, the wearable technology market was booming. Especially popular were devices such as GPS-enabled smartwatches, designed to be worn by children. Sales were predicted to top £600 million by 2025, leading to a debate about balancing the benefits of keeping children safe against the ethics of doing so through tracking.

2021: Online Education

Then, of course, came the pandemic. During the UK's first lockdown, the word most frequently Googled by parents was "homeschooling": searches for this term increased by 1,000 per cent when schools closed.

Thirteen years after its launch, Education is now the App Store's third most popular category, (pipped to the post only by Games and Business). It features more than 75,000 education apps, illustrating just how digitally-saturated our family lives now are, and how digitally-savvy parents across the globe have become during the last decade.

What will the next decade bring to our families' digital lives?
Join us at:
Vodafone News Centre
for the latest on Smart Living and world of tech.
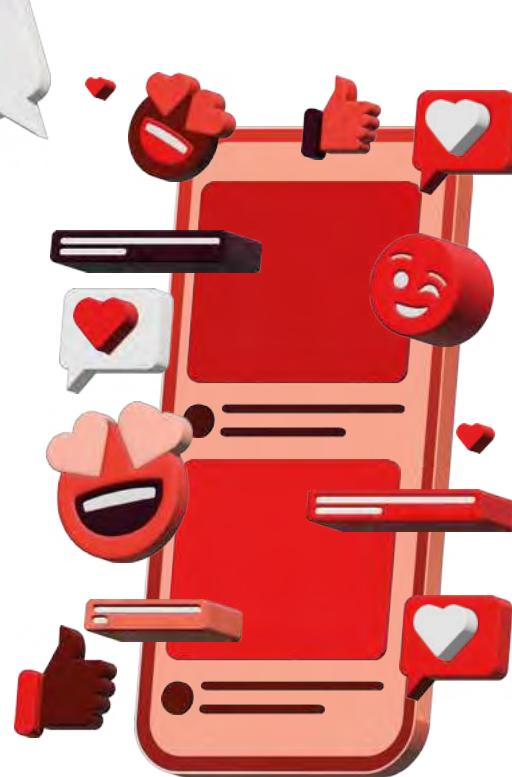
How to be an ally online

According to the Office for National Statistics, around one in five children aged 10 to 15 years in England and Wales experienced online bullying last year, whether on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms or mobile phones.

> **"By raising your voice, calling out bullies, reaching out to trusted adults or by creating awareness of the issue. Even a simple act of kindness can go a long way."**

S cary? Yes. But look at those numbers: odds are, your child will be in a position to support those in trouble, with their self-worth and values intact. Recently, charities and campaigners have been stressing the importance of teaching children not just about the negative impacts of bullying, but about the positive influence of allies, too. The Collins Dictionary describes an ally as: "someone who supports people who are in a minority group or who are discriminated against, even though they do not belong to that group themselves." When it comes to online bullying, such allies are very important, says Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten, child psychologist and Associate Professor in Childhood Studies at the University of Portsmouth.

Such bullying exists in many forms, she explains "from exclusion, name-calling and racism through to stigmatising as well as sexting…" Whatever its shape, one thing remains constant for the young person on the receiving end: "From my conversations with young people, it is clear that they want peer support."

The question is, what support could your child give, and how?

KINDNESS IS THE KEY

Global children's charity Unicef's campaign against cyberbullying highlights a number of ways in which young people can be allies: "by raising your voice, calling out bullies, reaching out to trusted adults or by creating awareness of the issue. Even a simple act of kindness can go a long way."

Dr Sims-Schouten agrees that kindness is key but points out that children cannot be allies on their own. They need strong and effective systems in place to back them up, such as robust reporting mechanisms and peer support networks at school. Without these, "it's hard to ask a child to be 'brave' and call out bullying, because this may make them the victim themselves."

Ensuring your school is on board is therefore key. But there's plenty parents can do, too. Since 24% of 3-4 year-olds now have their own tablets, Dr Sims-Schouten says it is important to send clear messages about what positive and negative behaviour looks like online from the start. Rather than frightening or overwhelming small children with words like 'bullying', however, she suggests framing early conversations in terms of 'kind' and 'unkind' behaviour.

ROLE-MODEL ADULTS

If your tween or teen is reluctant to talk, don't panic. Modelling inclusive and kind behaviour yourself can have just as big an impact. Make sure that your children see you treating marginalised and minority groups with kindness and without judgement. Point out discrimination when you see it on TV or in the news and clearly reject it.

If you do want to start a conversation: "use what they tell you as a hook," suggests Dr Sims-Schouten. If they share a story about someone else's treatment online or at school, ask them gently how they felt about it, and explore the subject together. Indeed, when it comes to cyberbullying, the child psychologist says, many of us hit a hurdle: "a lot of parents do not have the knowledge and understanding of all the platforms that young people are engaging in." So the first step in raising an ally is to stop and listen. "This discussion should be a two-way street," she explains. "What do they think? What does online bullying mean to them?"

Whatever happens, children should know: "they are in a safe place to discuss this, where they won't be penalised or judged." Helping your child be an ally to others, it turns out, means being their ally first.

How to get the most out of your phone's camera

Everyone's a photographer now. But how can you best capture the moments of your family's life?

A decent smartphone can take photos that rival traditional cameras. Apple even features photos shot on iPhones in its adverts, blown up to epic proportions on train platforms and billboards.

So why do the photos you take of your children and pets always end up looking like the blurry inside of a washing machine, mid cycle? Julia Bostock is an award-winning children's fashion and family lifestyle photographer who shoots advertising campaigns and editorials for leading brands and magazines in locations around the world.

Matt Maran is a wildlife and landscape photographer who has won Wildlife Photographer of the Year, European Wildlife Photographer of the Year, and the British Wildlife Photography Awards. His work is featured in the Natural History Museum's new book, Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Unforgettable Photojournalism.

Here, the pair share their top hacks for making the most of your smartphone and taking beautiful photos that capture your children's characters and your local surroundings, whether you are a total beginner or a keen amateur.

10 years of Digital Parenting

Over the last decade the world has gone snap happy, with 1.43 trillion digital photos taken in 2020.
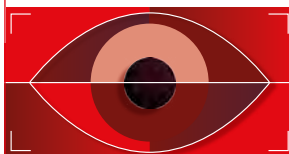
COMPOSE YOURSELF

"When it comes to smartphones, I think one of the great things about them is how they strip photography back," says Maran. "It's much more about the photographer's eye and perspective than any fancy tools or techniques.

Framing and composition are everything. When I run workshops, I talk a lot about avoiding the 'human-eye view' – that's standing upright with your phone, taking the photo from your eye-level. When we get down low with nature – be it a fox or your pet cat – you're at that subject's level and it makes for a much more impactful picture."

Bostock says that the same applies to photographing children: "You want the smartphone itself to be positioned at the same level as their eyeline. So, when you're shooting children, the key thing is to get down to their level. Crouch if shooting a toddler, lie on the floor if you're taking a photo of your baby."

FOCUS POCUS

Whether you're shooting on Android or on an iPhone, a simple way to boost the quality of your snaps of people is to select 'portrait' mode, says Julia. "This will throw the background into softer focus, creating a shorter depth of field and a more professional photo."

Also: "Don't forget to use the little yellow square that appears when you tap the screen." The square establishes the point of focus and will appear wherever you tap. "If you're shooting children, then positioning it around their eyes is the simplest way to make sure that you're focusing on what matters most – their faces and their curious expressions."

The same applies to shooting local wildlife, says Maran.

> Don't always have the focus point in the centre of your photo. Having your subject off-centre frame, and creating space around it, can make for a much more interesting photo.

LIGHTEN UP

"Turn the flash off," advises Bostock, since your smartphone's LED flash is likely to spoil the quality of your photos. "I always prefer natural light, so if you're shooting indoors, turn the

electric lighting off too, and open the curtains instead. If you're outside, shooting either at the beginning or end of the day will ensure you get soft light, coming from the side and creating gentle shadow and interesting side light instead of beating straight down from overhead and creating ugly shadows on the face." She also recommends the Camera+ 2 (camera.plus) app: "It allows you to use your phone like a professional camera and be in control of your aperture settings and shutter speed."

The same applies to landscape photography: "Most smartphones have a function whereby you tap the screen to control the exposure – how light or dark your picture is," adds Maran. "It's almost always better to under expose. It takes away distracting highlights, helps the colours saturate a little more, it boosts contrast and, with outdoor photography, those are often the biggest issues."

BURST IS BEST

If you are photographing a child who is racing around, or some local wildlife in motion, Maran suggests trying the burst mode on an iPhone. "Being able to shoot rapidly just by holding your finger down on the button is a really useful function that replicates SLR photography. Even if you're just trying to capture insects buzzing around on a window box, it gives you a greater chance of capturing something in flight."
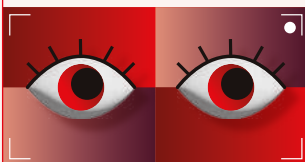
PRACTISE THE ART OF DISTRACTION

"This one's more about your own toolkit than your phone's," says Bostock, "but it's one of the most important bits of advice I'd give to people shooting their children."

"Older children and teens are now so used to taking photos of themselves on their phones that they'll often put a practised pose or 'selfie-face' on when you turn your own smartphone on them," she says. "Younger children will also put a really forced smile on if you ask them to pose for the camera. So, the art of distraction is key if you want to catch them in a more natural pose."

Luckily, there's an app for that. Talking Carl and Gugl (download from the App store) are characters who make cartoon noises and repeat anything you say in a high-pitched voice. Play the sounds from your phone, and they will immediately capture the attention and curiosity of babies and toddlers. As soon as they turn their heads to you, snap away.

Shooting older children and teens requires a more low-tech technique, says Bostock. Here you just have to keep them talking. "I'll ask them: What's your favourite food? Would you rather...? Oh my goodness, did you see that flying cat?" Anything to make them forget that they're having their photo taken, so that you can catch them in the moment when their cogs and imagination are whirring."

> " Being able to shoot rapidly just by holding your finger down on the button is a really useful function that replicates SLR photography.

Digital grandparenting:
how to optimise time spent together online

From reading stories to learning the names of birds, grandparents have been a source of love and wisdom since time began. But what happens when our interactions are virtual?

"There are things that are lost, of course, when our interactions move online," says Nilu Ahmed, a behavioural psychologist at the University of Bristol whose research revolves around ageing. "The smells we associate with people, home and habits... those can't be replaced. Touch can't either, but a lot is gained."

In fact, a study from the London School of Economics suggests that, rather than draining the magic out of grandparent/grandchild interactions, digital activities like watching films, playing games and keeping in touch via calls and messaging apps can bring families closer together.

This potential only grew during the pandemic, says Dr Ahmed. "While we've been physically apart, technology has enabled many of us to be more emotionally available to each other in lockdown than we were before," she explains. "People across generations are much more technologically capable and we've realised that the digital world is a really valuable space to share."

While tablets, apps and social media platforms are giving grandparents new opportunities to connect with the young people they love, getting to grips with them all can be daunting. The charity Age UK recently published a report showing that only a quarter of over-75s actually increased their internet usage during the pandemic. So which apps are best for connecting with grandchildren?

10 years of Digital Parenting

In 2013, only 29% of over 75s were online - now it's shot up to 58%.

called, the greater the enjoyment, but the calls did not have to last long – most reported video interactions of less than 30 minutes, with the majority lasting a brief 5-15 minutes. So keep it regular and snappy.

And use a big screen. A recent study from the University of Michigan showed that people's ability to understand content is directly linked to the size of the screen on which they view it. The bigger the screen, the better the recall.

BABIES AND TODDLERS

Reading boosts children's self-esteem, vocabulary, imagination and even sleep. Yet according to the National Literacy Trust, fewer than half of nought to two-year-olds are read to daily by their parents. Here's where grandparents can step in

even if they can't be at their grandchild's bedside physically.

Developed during the pandemic to bring families closer together, Tell is an app that enables grandparents to record their own voices reading classic stories.

Once shared, grandchildren can either listen to the audio alone, or play the story back while looking

"only a quarter of over-75s actually increased their internet usage during the pandemic."

PRE-SCHOOLERS

In 2018, cognitive scientists at MIT published a study suggesting that 'back-and-forth' interactions are essential to small children's language and brain development. In other words, it isn't enough to talk at children. You need to talk with them, asking them

at the illustrations that the app provides to accompany each chapter. You can even create your own story, so the grandkids can hear the story of how grandpa met grandma, or the funny one about the time daddy was naughty in school.

Available on Google Play and the App Store (tellapp.com).

questions about what you read or see together. The principle is no less important in the digital world than in the physical one.

The Caribou app lets grandparents and grandchildren video call one another while sharing games and books in real time. Colour a picture together, and each of you can see the other's work developing on your own screen. You also see each other's faces in the corner, and can chat as you scribble.

Available on Google Play and the App Store (caribu.com).

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Once kids start school, grandparents can play a big part in their education. Video platforms like Zoom and FaceTime are a great way for grandparents to help with school subjects, or to teach extra-curricular skills like cooking – just send their parents a list of ingredients ahead of time, and prop screens in front of you, so each can see what the other is doing.

Earlier this year, The LEGO Foundation and the American over-fifties foundation AARP published a report showing that frequent video chats helped grandparents bond with young grandchildren. The more frequently they video

TEENS

As teenagers explore their independence, digital platforms often become an even more valuable way to communicate and connect. During the pandemic, grandparents became surprise stars on social media channels like TikTok; research suggested a 32% increase in the number of older people taking up gaming as they adopted the hobbies of their younger relatives in order to connect with them remotely.

Letting your teenage grandchildren teach you something new is a great way to acknowledge their maturity and signal that you're happy to put them in the driving seat.

Digital careers:
What job would I like to do, and how do I get there?

How to shine in the brave new world of digital careers

Britain is sleepwalking into a digital skills disaster. According to a new report from The Learning & Work Institute, 40% fewer students now choose IT-based GCSEs than in 2015.

Many employers say that young people aren't leaving full-time education with enough digital knowledge.

So how can the UK close the skills gap?

Fiona Taylor, Careers & Enterprise Coordinator at Sydenham School, London, says:

"Technology in school needs a big investment. Many students are put off because they try coding, don't enjoy it and then dismiss the whole sector."

Taylor's students discover new horizons through partnering with charities and companies such as Speakers for Schools and JP Morgan. But not all are so fortunate. Here's how they might map out a digital career path.

Understand where the gaps lie

Many school leavers don't understand what is available. Students who do can exploit the huge employment growth in this area.

Covering everything from cybersecurity to marketing insights, a work experience programme like Vodafone's Innovators can improve their knowledge of the digital world.

Nick Brand, from AI recruitment business OnSkil, says candidates with this knowledge really shine at interview.

"Candidates should talk about all areas of IT experience, including skills they've picked through university, clubs, forums or volunteering work." Vodafone's programme for increasing digital skills is also improving capability in this area.

Find the right role models

Many students are put off digital careers because of a lack of role models. Taylor says that mentoring schemes can help them understand what roles are available and that they're open to 'people like them'.

"Careers Ready, Diana Awards and Envision are just some of the charities that coordinate mentoring initiatives."

Get guidance on career paths

"Taking an interest in digital skills from a young age is key, so speak to a careers advisor who can highlight different routes into digital jobs," says James Hallahan, Director of the Technology Division at recruitment giant Hays.

Carolyn Pearson, Digital Strategist at Innovent Digital, has this advice: "For most in-company tech roles, the job is about the business, rather than the tech. Showing you understand the company's objectives, strategy, products and customers will demonstrate a level of maturity."

See past the obstacles

Young women often struggle to see digital careers as appealing. Initiatives such as the Code Like A Girl workshop can help – with 45% saying they enjoyed coding more and 12% being more likely to consider a job in technology.

5 digital roles you may not have considered:

1. Scrum master

Responsible for leading a small 'scrum team' through a project process.

Requirements: A degree is unnecessary, but you will need a good knowledge of Agile project management and Scrum principles. Some large organisations might require Scrum Master certifications.

2. Game designer

LinkedIn's Jobs on the Rise survey for the UK says the need for Games Designers and Developers rose by 58% last year.

Requirements: Knowledge of the programming language Go and Javascript.

3. Machine learning engineer

In the fast-growing Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector, Machine Learning Engineers design self-running systems.

Requirements: Many in this field have a master's degree or PhD in computer science/software engineering, plus data modelling abilities. Honing your Python coding skills will also help.

4. Digital marketer

Digital marketing involves promoting brands online.

Requirements: Enter with a degree in marketing or similar, or an apprenticeship. There are private courses on writing marketing copy for the internet, and many gain experience by helping a charity or other organisation market online.

5. Forensic computer analyst

With cybercrime on the rise, analysts are in demand.

Requirements: There are apprenticeships in this field, or you could do a degree in computer science or cyber security.

For further help and support

Internet Matters
→ internetmatters.org

The Mix
→ themix.org.uk

Digital Awareness UK
→ digitalawarenessuk.com

Think U Know
→ thinkuknow.co.uk

Child Net
→ childnet.com

Barnardo's
→ barnardos.org.uk

The Trussell Trust
→ trusselltrust.org

Good Things Foundation
→ goodthingsfoundation.org

Digital Parenting website
→ newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/smart living/digital-parenting/

10 U years of Digital Parenting

Parental Controls & Filtering Advice
→ newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/ smart-living/digital-parenting/ parental-controls-and- filtering-advice/

Digital Parenting by vodafone