

ONLINE SAFETY OVER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

With many of our children due to be off school and with access to new technology in the upcoming school holidays and Christmas period, the potential for online exploitation will be at its highest. We are seeing the use of the internet as a tool being exploited by extremists in order to expose young people to hateful content and potentially radicalise them.

Although rare, there is a risk that with increased online activity, feelings of stress and isolation may be exploited. An understanding of digital safety will help parents and carers safeguard loved ones from a range of harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise vulnerable people.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT MY CHILD MAY BE BEING EXPLOITED ONLINE?

Online exploitation is often hard to recognise because it is a complex issue. When it comes to being drawn into extremist ideas online, sometimes there are clear warning signs, in other cases the changes are less obvious.

Although some of these traits may be quite common among young people, taken together they could be indicators that your child may need some help:

- Exploring new and unusual websites, chat forums and platforms. Harmful influences may push individuals towards platforms with a greater degree of anonymity.
- Joining new or secret groups since isolation.
- Speaking with new friends or being secretive about chats during online gaming or in forums.
- A strong desire to seek new meaning, identity and purpose.
- Using language you wouldn't expect them to know.
- Watching, sharing or creating films online linked to religious, political or racial hate.
- Becoming increasingly argumentative or refusing to listen to different points of view.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE ONLINE?

The above are merely signs that they might need help, but you know your child best and you will want to speak with them first. Check in with them and ask about what they are viewing, who they are speaking to and how they are feeling. This might feel difficult, but here are some pointers to help you:

- Listen carefully to their fears and worries. Find some helpful tips [here](#).
- Review and adjust privacy and safety settings if you or your child is signing up to a new online service.
- You can switch on family friendly filters to help prevent age inappropriate content being accessed on devices in your home. The UK Safer Internet Centre provides [guidance](#) on how to do this.
- Internet Matters have provided [step by step guides](#) on how to setup parental controls including Roblox, TikTok, and many more.
- Internet Matters have also created a [checklist](#) for setting up any new and/or second hand devices or technologies.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

If you are worried about your child please do not hesitate to contact Leeds Prevent or the safeguarding team/pastoral lead at your child's school for support.

CONTACT US:

Leeds Prevent on prevent@leeds.gov.uk, telephone 0113 535 0810 or visit www.leeds.gov.uk/prevent

[If you think someone is in immediate danger ring 999]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES:

- [Educate Against Hate Parents Hub](#) provides resources and advice.
- [Thinkuknow](#) provides resources help keep children safe online.
- [ACTEarly](#) provides resources and can be contacted for advice 24/7
- [Leeds for Learning](#) provides further guidance from Leeds Prevent