Essex County Council

	Online safety guidance / resources – updated June 2020

Contents

Update – June 2020

Government

The government has updated its [Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for parents and carers to keep children safe online](#) guidance. The guidance, which provides advice and information to help parents and carers to keep children safe online during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, now includes information on Apps to help children stay safe online.

Online grooming

Children continue to spend more time online due to COVID-19, and the [National Crime Agency](#) is aware from online chats that offenders have been discussing opportunities to abuse children during the crisis. [Europol](#) has seen a surge in attempts by offenders to contact young people on social media.

As more children begin to return to school, please continue to be vigilant about the signs of possible abuse that may have occurred during the lockdown and may potentially continue – including through online grooming. The [NSPCC](#) has some useful information about grooming on its website, including the signs, effects and how to report it.

The COVID-19 period may also result in children being more exposed to offenders through online gaming, the use of chat groups in Apps, phishing attempts via email, and unsolicited contact using social media.

Children may also become lonely and isolated. This could make some children more inclined towards making explicit material to exchange with peers, which offenders may try to benefit from – connecting with them to produce explicit material or to arrange an actual meeting once restrictions are lifted.

Please remind children and their families of the risks that exist in relation to internet use, and the need to be vigilant online.

Examples of new advice, guidance and information from other organisations

[NSPCC Learning](#)

NSPCC Learning has released the third [podcast](#) in a series focussing on education during the coronavirus pandemic. In the podcast a head of department at a large secondary school talks about the safeguarding concerns her school has had and how these have been addressed. The podcast focusses on various areas including remote teaching, pastoral support, and supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

The UK Safer Internet Centre has published a [report](#) looking at the expectations and effects this time has had towards children online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to online safety.

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
          Date: June 2020

Update – May 2020

The government and many of the organisations highlighted in this pack have continued to update their advice and guidance about remote learning and online safety; some organisations have produced new resources. We have highlighted some of these in our COVID-19-related communications but do try to keep an eye on the various websites and other communication channels if you can. Resources are becoming more tailored to the development of online risks that arise as we progress through COVID-19.

The COVID-19 period has seen those intent on criminal exploitation seek new ways to achieve this, including online where there has been an apparent increase in grooming attempts. We must continue to do all we can to help children, young people and their parents and carers to address and thereby mitigate against the risks that exist online.

Thank you – for everything you are doing to continue to keep children, young people and the wider school community safe, online and in other respects, during this challenging time.

Government

The government updated its [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)](#) guidance on 21 May 2020, to include information about virtual lessons and live streaming, in particular finding which video conference service is right for your school and using them securely. The guidance also includes reference to resources such as [Tootoot](#), which provides a confidential route for pupils to report bullying or abuse, and the free [Professionals Online Safety Helpline](#) which supports the online safeguarding of both children and professionals.

The Minister of State for Security [wrote](#) to industry partners recently on countering online child sexual exploitation and abuse during COVID-19. Although this correspondence is not addressed to schools specifically, it contains reference to the Global Partnership to [End Violence Against Children](#) and their campaign to help keep children safe online, where there are links to resources which may be helpful to schools, and parents and carers.

Examples of new advice, guidance and information from other organisations

[**Internet Watch Foundation**](#) (IWF)

The IWF has published an [article](#) in which they report that more than eight million attempts to access child sexual abuse material online during the coronavirus lockdown have been made in the UK, with experts warning the figure could be even higher. They have reminded internet users of the need to remain vigilant and to [report](#) child sexual abuse material they may inadvertently see online.

[**NSPCC Net Aware**](#)

NSPCC New Aware has published some tips for keeping children safe online during COVID-19 and beyond. Schools may wish to share the [8 tips for keeping your kids safe online during lockdown](#) with parents and carers.

Introduction

During the current closure period, many children will be accessing online resources to support their learning at home. This will be an integral part of closure arrangements and it is essential that it is undertaken in a safe way, supported by appropriate risk assessments. The other aspect of online safety during this time is that pupils not in school will have significantly more time available to them to spend online. This clearly presents potential safeguarding risks.

Schools should seek to achieve a secure framework in which pupils and staff can work safely. Arrangements for remote learning should be communicated to parents, including measures for safeguarding. In addition, schools are always key in supporting children to keep themselves safe online; it is particularly important to remind children and their parents and carers of what they can do to keep safe online during this time.

There is much information already available to help schools in this respect. Many organisations, for example the NSPCC and SWGfL, have released new guidance in response to COVID-19. This document brings that information together into one pack. Links are included so that schools can access what they may need quickly.

Some of the resources referred to in this pack will also be particularly helpful to children and parents and carers *(see Appendices B and C).* Schools may therefore wish to make this information available to them through their communication with parents and carers about the use of online resources during the closure period.

All school staff should be able to identify potential online abuse and know how to act if they suspect this or receive information that suggests a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff should be reminded of how to keep children safe online and any interim Child Protection policy to cover this period should address this issue. It would be useful to share relevant guidance with all staff with a request that they acknowledge receipt and confirm they have read and understood it.

Remote learning

Remote learning takes place when a learner and member of staff giving instruction are not in the same place and the lesson is instead delivered through downloading information, webinars, or live streaming.

The concept of remote learning is not new. For some time, many schools have provided a virtual learning environment through which their pupils have been working and learning from home, outside of normal school time. Pupils can complete homework, coursework and other things remotely and submit them online, which are then marked and returned to pupils by their school.

The government have acknowledged that whilst there is no expectation for teachers to stream or provide recorded videos, many schools, colleges and universities are using video conferencing platforms to provide remote education. They have also stated that it is important for educational settings to ensure that they are making use of the security features and filters on any service they choose to use, and advised users to refer to the service providers' official support site which will assist in setting the right security features and filters.

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
Date: June 2020

Schools should be mindful of the potential risks associated with webinars and live streaming. With this in mind, it may be preferable for schools to pre-record content, and then make this available for pupils online. However, it is for schools to decide on how to support home learning and any arrangements should be underpinned by a risk assessment. Schools may find it helpful to consider the guidance in this pack, and the advice that is available on the websites that have been highlighted.

Some schools will be using their existing online systems during the closure period. It is important for schools to check that the safety features on these systems are fully up to date and secure.

When using technology to support home learning, schools should consider safeguarding issues and the following points:

- Video-conferencing programs should not be used on a one to one basis between school staff and pupils – remote learning on a one to one basis is not appropriate;

- The platform should allow the school to restrict the audience, for example by asking them to create a login and password;

- Other people should not be able to reproduce and distribute the stream;

- Consent for pupils to participate in the stream should be obtained;

- There should be a code of conduct for staff and pupils using online platforms, for example those with message boards;

- During online activity staff and pupils should be in a neutral area, (ie, not in a bedroom or bathroom);

- Pupils and staff should use school-allocated email addresses, not personal ones, or use usernames and passwords which must not be shared with others;

- School should remind pupils of who they can contact at school for help or support;

- Pupils' personal information such as their location, date of birth or phone number should be kept private.

Online safety

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child sexual exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation; technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm. An effective approach to online safety empowers a school or college to protect and educate the whole school or college community in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any incident where appropriate.

Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2019)

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
         Date: June 2020

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three main areas of risk:

Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;

Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults;

Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

Schools should be aware as far as possible of the possible online threats to pupil safety, as part of their wider safeguarding responsibilities. Schools should consider how they teach pupils to keep themselves safe online and pay particular attention to the list below:

- online bullying and associated mental health and wellbeing;

- the security of personal information;

- device addiction;

- gaming addiction;

- exploitation;

- grooming;

- accessing inappropriate material;

- sharing of inappropriate material;

- significant risk of harm / actual harm.

Schools cannot eradicate the risks that are associated with internet use. But by providing pupils and parents and carers with information on how to practise online safety, and through continuing to practise online safety in their communications during the closure period, schools can help to mitigate the risks and help to keep pupils safe from harm.

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
Date: June 2020

Appendix A - useful websites for schools

The government has published guidance to help education settings follow safeguarding procedures when teaching remotely:

- [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)](#)

- [Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges, and other providers](#)

In 2019 the government published guidance to support schools to teach their pupils how to stay safe online: [Teaching Online Safety in Schools](#).

The government recommends that schools review the guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) for organisations and individuals using video conferencing services securely: [Video conferencing services: using them securely](#)

For school business managers and IT staff considering which service to choose, the government recommends that they review the guidance from NCSC on considerations around video conferencing: [Video conferencing services: security guidance for organisations](#)

The NSPCC – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

The NSPCC works to protect children and prevent abuse to make child abuse a thing of the past. The charity has produced [guidance](#) about undertaking remote teaching safely, which is intended to guide schools in applying best-practice principles during these challenging and evolving times.

[NSPCC Learning](#)

A range of child protection and safeguarding teaching resources, advice and training for schools and colleges. Covers best practice principles and consideration, such as platforms, live streaming, consent, contacting children at home, child protection concerns, online safety and mental health and wellbeing. Also has links to other guidance that may be particularly useful currently.

[NSPCC Net Aware](#) provides news, information and updates around the social networks, Apps and games that children are using.

SWGfL

This charity aims to empower the safe and secure use of technology. Their website has a range of resources for schools covering online safety issues, and Safe Remote Learning [guidance](#) has been created. It contains a range of information and areas for schools to consider, including policy templates.

National Online Safety

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
   Date: June 2020

This organisation's mission is to make the internet a safer place for children, by equipping school staff, parents and children with the knowledge they need to understand online dangers and how best to react should an incident arise. They have produced a guide focussing on safe remote learning in education, and how to ensure the safer use of technology.

Internet Watch Foundation

'All children deserve to be protected from sexual abuse.' The Internet Watch Foundation works to minimise the availability of online sexual abuse content.

UK Safer Internet Centre

A partnership of three leading organisations: Childnet International, Internet Watch Foundation and SWGfL (Safety & Security Online).

The partnership's mission is to promote the safe and responsible use of technology for young people, through their:

Awareness Centre: provides advice and support to children and young people, parents and carers, schools and the children's workforce; coordinates Safer Internet Day across UK.

Helpline: provides support to professionals working with children and young people with online safety issues.

Hotline: an anonymous and safe place to report and remove child sexual abuse imagery and videos, wherever they are found in the world.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command – 'CEOP'

CEOP is a law enforcement agency that works to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse. Children, young people, their parents or carers and professionals can report concerns online to one of CEOP's Child Protection Advisors.

CEOP also offers a range of information about keeping safe from child sexual exploitation. This is separate information for different age ranges, for example 5-7, 8-10, 11-13 and 14+ year olds, with separate information for parents and carers, professionals and reporting.

Thinkuknow is an education programme from CEOP. New pages have been added to their website, including activity packs to support parents during COVID-19 and school closure. Each fortnight, Thinkuknow plan to release new home activity packs with simple 15-minute activities parents and carers can do with their children to support their online safety, at a time when they will be spending more time online at home. They have added information about video chat during isolation for parents and carers, and an online safety blog.

Childnet International

A children's charity with a range of free practical resources about online safety for teachers, including for children with Special Educational Needs. For example, they have produced cyber bullying guidance.

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Anti-Bullying Alliance

The Anti-Bullying Alliance is a coalition of organisations and individuals, working together to stop bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. Their website contains a Tools & Information section with information about online bullying.

PSHE Association

A charitable national association for PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education professionals. Members receive support, resources, training and guidance.

Parent Zone for schools

Resources to support teachers in educating their pupils about staying safe online, what to do if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation, and how to build their digital resilience.

LGfL

LGfL (The London Grid for Learning) is a community of schools and local authorities committed to using technology to enhance teaching & learning. They have a number of free resources on their website, including guidance about keeping children safe while teaching remotely, and their 'Twenty Safeguarding Considerations for Lesson Livestreaming'.

The Diana Award

A charity running projects aimed at reducing bullying in schools. Their resource section has information to help schools tackle cyberbullying along with resources from their *Be Strong Online Ambassador* programme – a peer-led initiative which aims to empower young people to increase the digital resilience of their peers.

DotCom Digital

A free resource for schools, created by children with Essex Police and the National Police Chief Council Lead for Internet Intelligence and Investigations. The resource aims to prevent young people becoming victims of online grooming, radicalisation, exploitation and bullying, by giving them the confidence to recognise warning signs and reach out to an adult for help.

Educate Against Hate

Government advice and trusted resources for schools to safeguard students from radicalisation, build resilience to all types of extremism and promote shared values.

The use of social media for online radicalisation

A briefing note for schools on how social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq.

Searching, screening and confiscation

Author: Matt Lewis, Safeguarding Adviser for Schools and Early Years
        Date: June 2020

Guidance to schools on searching children in schools and confiscating items such as mobile phones.

APPENDIX B - online resources for children

Childline

Childline helps anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Children can talk with Childline about anything, whether big or small; their trained counsellors can help. See their website or call free on 0800 1111.

BBC Own It

Updated in relation to COVID-19, this website provides support for young people to take control of their online life. Topics include help and advice, skills and inspiration on matters such as friendships and bullying, safety and self-esteem.

BBC Bitesize

A free online study support resource designed to help with learning, revision and homework. Bitesize provides support for learners aged 5 to 16+ across a wide range of school subjects. It also supports children and young people's wellbeing and career choices; since 20 April daily lessons have been published to help pupils across the UK with home schooling.

APPENDIX C - online resources for parents and carers

Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)

The ESCB is a statutory multi agency organisation which brings together agencies who work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Essex. It has produced guidance for parents and carers to help them understand online safety and exploitation generally.

Internet Matters – helping parents and carers keep their children safe online

A not-for-profit organisation that has a simple purpose – to empower parents and carers to keep children safe in the digital world. See their website for further information.

The Children's Society

A charity fighting child poverty and neglect, and helping all children have a better chance in life. They have produced information about online safety.

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

The NSPCC has produced several online safety guides, from setting up parental controls to advice on sexting, online games and video apps.

Parent Info

A website offering expert safety advice in relation to a range of online harms, endorsed by the National Crime Agency's CEOP command.

Common Sense Media

Independent reviews, age ratings, & other information about all types of media for children and their parents.

Parent Zone for families

A website with a range of digital age resources for families, including guides on digital platforms and trends.

Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner has published a digital safety and wellbeing kit for parents, and a safety guide for children. The kit and guide have been designed to help ensure children are safe and their wellbeing is looked after while at home during the coronavirus outbreak – when their screen time maybe higher than usual.

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS)

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) is a collaborative forum through which government, the tech community and the third sector work together to ensure the UK is the safest place in the world to be online.

Disrespect Nobody

Home Office advice on healthy relationships, including sexting and pornography.

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