



Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board
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Techno Safe

**A guide for parents and carers:
keeping children safe
with technology**

Safe children, safe lives

www.caerphillysafeguarding.org.uk

This leaflet aims to:

- Explain some of the current technology that is available
- Provide you with advice about what you can do to keep children and young people safe from potential harm and;
- Tells you where you can get further advice and information from.

In this leaflet the word technology refers to computers, laptops, notebooks, games consoles, mobile phones, MP3s, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs/Blackberrys) and any other technology that a child or young person can use to interact with others.

Technology like the Internet can be great fun and provides opportunities for your children to learn and develop. However, it also has some hidden dangers that you need to be aware of in order to keep children and young people safe.

The hidden dangers that technology can pose to children and young people

- Dangerous people sometimes use chat rooms, online games, social networking sites like Bebo, Facebook, My Space and other technology to gain access to children and young people in order to 'groom' and abuse them. It is not always possible to identify these people because they often lie about who they are and their age.
- Exposure to inappropriate material like adult pornography and other sexual images, violent images and gambling sites for example.
- Cyber Bullying - involves the use of the Internet and mobile phones to threaten, belittle, call names and frighten
- Other risks – These can include viruses, identify theft, hacking, financial exploitation

(Grooming – in this sense grooming is behaviour used by people who pose a risk to children to befriend children in order to sexually abuse them. It can include flattery, sympathising with their problems, isolating them from others, pretending they are children or young people too, pretending to have similar experiences/problems, giving them gifts/money for example. Further information about child abuse and neglect can be found in our leaflet, 'What is Child Abuse', which is available from our website or on request from the Safeguarding Children Board Co-ordinator on 01443 864798.)

Smart Rules

- Don't frighten your children or overreact but make sure you discuss the hidden dangers with your children (you could use this leaflet as a starting point) and make sure that they know they can tell you about anything that happens on the Internet or other technology that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Don't share any personal information over the Internet that could be used to identify you or your children and make sure your children don't either. (Personal information includes full name, address, date of birth, telephone numbers and name of school for example. Some people use nicknames when they are online and some people have separate online accounts to ensure that they cannot be identified. Also make sure that you use different passwords for each programme)
- You and your children should keep your Facebook/My Space/Bebo page private in order to prevent dangerous people from accessing it. Also remember not to add any personal information to your profiles. Take care about the photographs you and your children add to these pages as they can be accessed and altered by dangerous people. Advise your children not to accept anyone as a friend that they do not already know personally.'
- Make sure your children never go to meet anyone that they do not already know well – you don't always know who your children are talking to and neither do they.
- Make sure that children stay in the public space of a chat room and do not enter into private conversations.
- Keep the computer in a shared family space so that you can be sure it is being used safely.
- Install a firewall and other anti virus software on your computer.

- Install parental controls and privacy settings on your software (most packages will have a step by step guide that helps you do this)
- Remember that your children can interact with other people via computer, mobile phones, PDAs, games consoles and other equipment. They can access these devices anywhere not just your home computer, so it is vital that you teach your children about keeping themselves safe and put in place some simple ground rules.

Remember that there is no substitute for your supervision, advice and guidance

(Firewalls are part of a computer system or network that is designed to block unauthorised access of your technology. Anti virus software is used to block and detect viruses and prevent them from damaging your technology. Viruses are often sent via e-mail. Ask about these when you purchase your technology or go to a specialist shop and ask for advice)

Further advice and information

Childnet has a number of useful fact sheets for young people and parents including advice on firewalls, anti virus software, chat rooms, mobile phones, and the internet.

www.childnet-int.org

www.kidsmart.org.uk

www.chatdanger.com

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has some very useful advice for different age groups of children, parents and carers and professionals:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Further information about child abuse and neglect and other leaflets we have published, can be found on our website:

www.caerphillysafeguarding.org.uk.