



The internet and social media has become so important in our daily lives, as we socialise and work online and for children, the internet has become the new classroom and playground. Sadly, there are people out there that take advantage of this. The resources and information on this page aim to help you understand the way children view the digital world. A world that, to them, is becoming more and more their reality.

It is important to remember that the victim, the child, is **NEVER** to blame. Victims are always the victims. Online groomers can be very persuasive, and children should never be made to feel they did anything to encourage their exploitation. The best response an adult can provide a child who has been a victim of online exploitation is to comfort them, be supportive and help them address the issues they have encountered.

And of course, it's not just about when things go wrong. You can help your child to stay safe by creating an environment in which they feel able to speak openly about concerns they may have. You can do this by making good internet habits a part of your daily lives by limiting screen time, no devices at dinnertime/bedtime. Most importantly, talk to your children and show an active interest in what they are doing online - let them share what they're playing or looking at with you.

Take a listen to [this podcast by The 2 Johns](#) - a general overview of the internet, how we view it, and how our young people are growing up in a world of social media influences.

### Young children and preschoolers

You don't need to talk to your preschooler about online safety yet, right? Wrong. If you treat online safety just as you would treat road safety, then talking about safe internet use becomes the norm and not something that they feel needs to be hidden as they get older. So if they are worried about something they have seen online they can feel confident in talking to an adult about their concerns.

[Short animation](#) for parents and childcare providers

[Podcast](#) for parents and carers



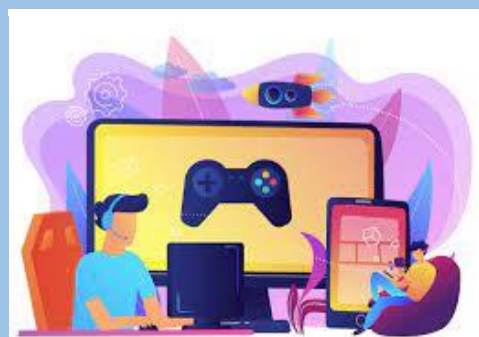
### Pre-teens

Did you Know... the number of children exploited online doubles between the ages of 11 and 12 years old? This means those at the end of primary school, about to enter secondary school are particularly at risk, especially as it's a time when some children begin to enter the world of social media. The brain development they're going through at this age makes it hard for them to make decisions or plan ahead. They get an increased drive for risk taking and trying out new things. They're super sensitive to social status and so they start craving peer approval. [Podcast](#) and [transcript](#) by Barnardos CARE

### Online Gaming

Did You Know...the security settings of off game chats are often not as good as those built into the game. Discord is a chat forum used by a lot of gamers and it's important to be aware that strangers can contact your child especially on public or large servers and send inappropriate, mean or sexual content. [Find out more about Discord](#) and how to keep your child safe. [This video](#) by James Pearson, Violence and Vulnerability Unit is all about gaming. He discusses why parents need to be aware that their child's chat can filter out of the game and onto other platforms and what they need to be discussing with their children to keep their online gaming an enjoyable experience.

Perpetrators are increasingly targeting children and young people via online gaming sites, pretending to be someone who they are not. This can often lead to bullying, grooming and sexual exploitation. [The Breck Foundation](#) is a self-funding charity, raising awareness of playing safe whilst using the internet. CEOP's Thinkuknow has launched [Band Runner](#), an interactive game for 8-10 year olds to help build their knowledge, confidence and skills to stay safe from risks they might encounter online. The game is hosted on the area for 8-10-year-olds on the Thinkuknow website. [Internet Matters - Online Gaming \(The Basics\)](#)



# Online Bullying

Did You Know... just under half of those being investigated for exploiting others online are children and most are the same age as the victim. If you're worried your child might have been a victim there's more information on how to get help on our [bullying page](#).

Our [online bullying podcast](#) looks at the pressure from social media and the impact this has on young people. The 2 Johns talk about how parents can create a relationship with their child that encourages them to tell them about these issues and the support available.

# Fake Content

Deepfakes are swiftly proving the old adage that "seeing is believing" is no longer necessarily true. They can put inflammatory words into the mouths of politicians and transplant Hollywood A-listers into X-rated movies. But more recently, deepfakes are moving beyond the celebrity bubble and into the lives of ordinary members of the public – fuelling offences such as revenge porn and extortion.

[National Online Safety](#) have some useful guidance for parents about Deepfakes and online safety in general.

# Signs of Exploitation

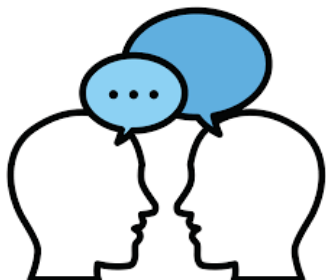
Traditional signs of exploitation are now blended with new ones. Things such as new trainers, more money, getting taxis everywhere are now combined with other warning flags including receiving online commodities – game currency and other gifts within games. The NSPCC has lots of useful information for parents and carers about [how to spots signs of exploitation and abuse](#).

# Conversation Starters

"What's your favourite game? Can I play?"  
"Can you show me your favorite TikTok dance/YouTube video?"  
"Have you got online friends? How do you know who they are?"

Showing an interest in your child's online life will help them feel they are able to come to you with any concerns they may have.

[NSPCC - Talking about online safety](#)  
[Safer Internet - Talking about online safety](#)



# Sending Nudes

There is no 'usual' stereotype, any young person could send a nude pic. Even your child. Make sure they understand that it is illegal to send nudes, even of themselves. And if it happens, try to understand whether there is peer pressure or grooming involved. Taking, making, sharing and possessing indecent images and pseudo-photographs (an image made by computer-graphics, which appears to be a photograph) of people under 18 is illegal. It doesn't matter how old they look, looking at indecent images of under 18s is illegal.

[This podcast by The 2 Johns](#) looks at why and how young people are drawn into taking and sharing inappropriate images. They discuss how both parents and young people may be feeling and how to have an empathetic conversation with your child, as well as practical advice on getting photos removed.

[Childline's Zipit app](#), uses humour to help teenagers deal with unwanted requests for sexual images of themselves. The free app offers young people a gallery of images and animations which they can send in response to requests for sexual pictures and to deal with difficult sexting situations.

[Sexting advice for parents](#) - how to have those important conversations with children

# All About Apps

With children spending more and more time online over the last few months, there has been an explosion in popularity of certain apps and games. TikTok has soared in popularity in recent months, with many celebrities getting involved with dances and challenges. If your child is using the app, make sure you know the risks involved and how to change privacy settings to private. [NSPCC's Net Aware](#) has lots of information on how to make your child's social media secure and a detailed description of the most popular apps, sites and games.

# Parental Controls

Parents and carers should be ensuring the settings of the apps and online games that their children use are set to private, with location settings turned off, to restrict the ways in which they could potentially be targeted by perpetrators. Many apps are public facing automatically, and have to be manually set to 'private'. You can use parental controls to help you block or filter the content your child sees when searching online. Parental controls are also available to help you to:

- plan what time of day your child can go online and how long for
- stop them from downloading apps they're too young for
- manage the content different members of the family can see

It's important to bear in mind that children and young people can potentially have access to the internet anywhere, not just at home. There are wifi hotspots, internet cafes, friends house and of course mobile data is available 24/7. So, whilst parental controls are useful, the most important thing you can do is have an open and inquisitive relationships with your child about their online interests.

[Find out more about setting up Parental Controls.](#)