**E-Safety Information and Guidelines for Host Tutors**

[Taken from E-safety - Developing whole-school policies to support effective practice (Wise Kids/ BECTA)](http://www.wisekids.org.uk/BECTA%20Publications/esafety.pdf)

ICT can offer many positive educational and social benefits to young people, but unfortunately there are some dangers. As in any other area of life, children and young people are vulnerable and may expose themselves to danger, whether knowingly or unknowingly, when using the internet and other technologies. Additionally, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate, or possibly illegal. Some of the issues and risks are summarised below.

**Copyright infringement**

Copyright law applies on the internet, but is ignored by many young people who download and swap music files, cut and paste homework assignments from others’ work, or even purchase whole assignments from online cheat sites without realising the implications and consequences.

**Obsessive use of the internet and ICT**

There is the potential for children and young people to become obsessed with the internet and related technologies. Factors such as spending a significant amount of time online, deterioration of the quality of school work, diminished sleep time, or negative impacts upon family relationships, may all be indicators that the internet is taking too high a priority in a young person’s life.

**Exposure to inappropriate materials**

There is a risk that when using the internet, email or chat services, young people may be exposed to inappropriate material. This may be material that is pornographic, hateful or violent in nature, encourages activities that are dangerous or illegal, or is just age-inappropriate or biased. One of the key benefits of the web is that it is open to all, but unfortunately this also means that those with extreme political, racist or sexist views are able to spread their distorted view of the world.

In the case of pornography, there is no doubt that the internet plays host to a large amount of legal and illegal material.

Curiosity about pornography is a normal part of sexual development, but young people may be shocked by some of the material online. It is not known what the long-term effects of exposure to such images may be.

**Inappropriate or illegal behaviour**

Young people may get involved in inappropriate, antisocial or illegal behaviour while using new technologies. Just as in the real world, groups or cliques can form online, and activities that start out as harmless fun, such as voicing an opposing opinion to another member of a chat room, can quickly escalate to something much more serious. Online bullying is an unfortunate aspect of the use of new technologies, perceived as providing an anonymous method by which bullies can torment their victims at any time of day or night. While a young person may not be in physical danger, they may receive email, chat or text messages that make them feel embarrassed, upset, depressed or afraid. This can damage their self- esteem and pose a threat to their psychological wellbeing. Some children and young people may become involved in much more serious activities. Possible risks include involvement in identity theft or participation in hate or cult websites, or the buying and selling of stolen goods. The ease of access to online gambling, suicide sites, sites for the sale of weapons, hacking sites, and sites providing recipes for drug or bomb making are also of great concern.

Young people may also become involved in the viewing, possession, making and distribution of indecent and/or child pornographic images. Any concern relating to criminally obscene or criminally racist content can be reported to the [Internet Watch Foundation](https://www.iwf.org.uk/) or the police.

**Physical danger and sexual abuse**

The threat of physical danger is perhaps the most worrying and extreme risk associated with the use of the internet and other technologies. A criminal minority make use of the internet and related services such as chat rooms to make contact with young people. The intention of these people is to establish and develop relationships with young people with the sole purpose of persuading them into sexual activity. Paedophiles will often target specific individuals, posing as a young person with similar interests and hobbies in order to establish an online ‘friendship’. These relationships may develop over days or weeks, or even months or years, as the paedophile gains the trust and confidence of the young person, perhaps progressing to other forms of contact such as text messaging as a prelude to meeting in person. These techniques are often known as ‘online enticement’, ‘grooming’ or ‘child procurement’.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003, which came into force in May 2004, includes a grooming offence specifically introduced to combat this abuse of the internet and young people.

There is also a risk that while online a young person might provide information that can personally identify them or others, or arrange to meet people they have met online, so posing a risk to their safety or that of their family or friends.

**Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology, such as the internet or a mobile device to bully others.

Being a victim of cyberbullying can be very distressing for a young person and occasionally they don’t know who is bullying them. Cyberbullying includes things such as sending nasty text messages or emails, or setting up a hate group on a social networking site. The bullying may also happen 24/7 and the victim is often targeted even when they are in the comfort of their own home. Images and text messages can be circulated very quickly and widely on the internet which can make it difficult to combat cyberbullying.

**Sexting**

**What is sexting?**

**Sexting [verb] = sending sexually explicit content**

The term ‘sexting’ describes the use of technology to share intimate images of yourself. It’s a portmanteau of sex and texting. The content can vary, from text messages to images of partial nudity to sexual images or video.

Sexting often happens when a young person’s judgment has been clouded, e.g by pressure from someone else, or from the use of alcohol or drugs. This content is usually created to be sent to a partner, but can be between groups and can use a range of mobile devices, technologies and online spaces. Photos and videos are often created via webcam or Smartphone camera, and are shared on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr and Snapchat, messaging services such as IM or BBM, and video sites such as YouTube.

**Is it legal? Sexting and the Law**

If a young person under the age of 18 engages in sexting by creating an explicit photo or video of themselves, they could be held responsible for creating an image of child abuse. Sending this content on to another person is the distribution of an image of child abuse. By receiving content of this kind from another young person, they could be held responsible for possessing an image of child abuse.

The Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland have stated that young people engaging in sexting should be treated as victims in the first instance and not face prosecution as first time offenders, but the situation will be investigated to ensure the young people involved are not at risk. The police’s priority is those who profit from sexual images. Repeat offenders and more extreme cases are reviewed differently, still with a focus on avoiding prosecution unless absolutely necessary.

**Social networking**

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are very popular with young people, even those who are of primary age. These types of sites allow young people to be incredibly creative online, keep in touch with their friends as well as sharing photos and videos.

Many sites have a minimum user age of 13, although some interactive sites are designed specifically for younger children.

**Young people need to protect their online reputation**

Young people use social networking sites for many different purposes; to communicate with their friends, to share content and to find out new information. You need to remind your child that they need to be careful about what they’re posting online. Children can sometimes believe that social networking sites are a private space for them and it can be difficult for them to realise that what they’re posting online may be publicly visible and can be spread very quickly to a large audience.

The blur between public and private expression can potentially put a child at risk in two main ways:

**Content**

Content which is uploaded online can be copied, altered and reposted by anyone and it is very difficult to ‘take back’ what may be later regretted. Children who [create or post inappropriate, offensive or even illegal content](http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/sexting) on their own or others’ web pages could get them into trouble with their school, friends and even the police, depending on the nature of the material.

**Contact**

Young people need to be aware of how much personal information they upload onto these sites. If a user of a social networking site doesn’t protect their information by enabling the correct privacy settings, they could be exposing their information to adults with a sexual interest in children. Posting or chatting about personal details might enable someone to identify and contact your child online or in person. Sharing personal information may also increase the risk of cyberbullying.

**Downloading**

There are many great ways of accessing and downloading music, film, TV and video safely online and it is important that children and young people understand how to download content legally.

1. Music, film and TV on the internet - what you should know:

Copyright law applies to downloading, sharing and streaming just as in the world of physical CDs and DVDs. If you make music, film or TV content available to others on a file-sharing network, download from an illegal site, or sell copies without the permission of those who own the copyright, then you are breaking the law and could face serious penalties.

2. Staying tuned in while staying legal:

There is a wide choice of legal sites where you can download or "stream" (transmit over the internet) music, film or TV content. Some are stores where you can buy downloaded tracks, albums, TV shows, videos or films to play on a computer, or a portable device or on a music player. Others charge a monthly subscription fee and let you stream from an internet-connected device at any time. Some services provide entertainment for free, supported by advertising.

3. What you can and can't do with music, film and TV online:

It is illegal to upload or download copyrighted files without permission from the person who owns the rights. File sharing services can in theory be used legally, but in practice nearly all the content on them is illegal. The only safe way to use them legally is to be sure you are sharing materials that are not protected by someone else's copyright.

4. Staying safe and responsible:

Illegal file-sharing programmes and websites pose greater risks to your computer or mobile phone than legitimate sites. Users often unwittingly download viruses or spyware and can inadvertently share personal computer files and information. Some files are purposely misnamed on file-sharing and peer-to-peer networks to trick people into downloading them.

**Gaming**

Online gaming is hugely popular with children and young people. Recent research shows that gaming is one of the top activities enjoyed by 9-16 year olds online, with gaming more popular than social networking.

From sport related games, to mission based games and quests inspiring users to complete challenges, interactive games cater for a wide range of interests, and can enable users to link up and play together. Games can provide a fun and social form of entertainment often encouraging teamwork and cooperation when played with others.

Just like offline games, they can have educational benefits, and be used, for example, to develop skills and understanding. Traditionally, games could be bought from shops, often in the form of a disk for use on a PC or console. Now, games can also be downloaded online. Games are played on many platforms, with those bought in shops often having an online component to them. Internet connectivity in a game adds a new opportunity for gamers as it allows players to find and play against, or with, other players from around the world (in a multi-player game).

There are many ways for users to play games online. This includes free games found on the internet, games on mobile phones and handheld consoles, as well as downloadable and boxed games on PCs and consoles.

**Online grooming**

The internet can be a fantastic place for children and young people to connect with their friends, discover new things and be creative. However, 'friends' made online may not be who they say they are. This is a difficult concept for children to understand.

Online grooming is the process by which an adult with an inappropriate sexual interest in children will approach a child online, with the intention of fostering a relationship with that child, to be able to meet them in person and intentionally cause harm. For more information and age appropriate resources for children relating to online grooming, visit [**Thinkuknow**](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/).

**Online Dating**

Online dating has become very popular over recent years and many young people see it as a legitimate way of meeting people. Apps or websites such as Tinder, Zoosk, Match.com and Plenty of Fish give users access to personal information and photographs in much the same way as Facebook or other social networking sites, but with the added risk of users purposefully making this information available to people they do not know and have never met. Though online dating can be very positive, it is important that users know the risks. Most dating websites or apps have an age limit of 18 or over, however, this is unlikely be verified, so it is easy enough for under 18s to sign up. Anyone using online dating sites should be aware that: the people they are talking to may not be who they say they are or may have misrepresented themselves; photographs can be viewed by anyone using the site and once uploaded are in the public domain; details such as address, phone number or work location should not be openly disclosed; users should be extremely cautious about revealing personal or intimate information. If arranging to meet someone from an online dating site, every care should be taken to stay safe, i.e. tell someone where you are going and arrange to call or text regularly throughout the date, go somewhere public and close to home etc.

**Premium Rate Content**

**Buying content for your phone - apps**

Mobile phone downloads and apps are very popular among young people and are easily available from websites and online services such as Apple’s App Store and Google Play.

Often when one emerges it can quickly becomes ‘*the* thing’ to have and talk about in the playground. A lot of popular apps are free to download, but this does not mean they won’t charge you later on – many games are free up to a point, before then asking for a payment in order to continue onto the next level or to access additional features.

When involved in the game and eager to progress further, it’s easy for a child to just click to ‘pay and continue’ despite any messages asking them to confirm this, and for them not to consider the cost. The charge of ‘playing on’ may be less than a pound per time, but this can mount up very easily. Some transactions can cost considerably more.

**Buying content for your phone – premium rate services**

There are a number of services available that allow users to sign up via their mobile phone number to download ringtones, music, video and other content. These are very popular amongst young people, but it is important to be aware that by signing up for the service, they may have signed up for a subscription. Rather than just paying one charge for access to new content, they could be charged over and over again without realizing.

**Practical E-Safety Steps for Host Tutors to Take**

1. **Install Parental Controls on your home internet network**

Your internet service provider will be able to advise you how to install Parental Controls, restricting the access to adult sites (including pornography and gambling). Having such controls installed is a vital safeguard of students’ online safety during their stay with you.

1. **Be aware of your students’ online activity, and regulate time spent online**

Many students will have their own devices (such as mobile phones) which can be connected to the internet independently of your home WiFi network. Remember that while they are staying in your home, your own house rules regarding phone and internet use are applicable – make sure that you have rules in place which ensure that mobile phone use does not disrupt students’ learning or social time.

1. **Avoid connecting with under-18s on social media**

Host tutors are in a professional position of authority when hosting under-18s – just like a teacher in a state or language school. It is important to maintain a professional boundary and to err on the side of caution with regards to social media, and avoid making connections altogether.