

Be the change: Unite for a better internet

Background Information

This year's theme for Safer Internet Day is 'Be the change: Unite for a better internet' with a subtheme of 'The Power of Image', focusing on the ways that young people use image and video to communicate. It is important that parents are also engaged and informed to ensure their children can get the most out of the internet. Childnet, as part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, has created a parents presentation, conversation starters for parents, a parents letter to send home, a poster to promote the parent session, a parent information sheet with useful links and of course this script, to make it as easy as possible for you to run a parent session in your school/organisation for Safer Internet Day.

Also included is Childnet's 'Supporting Young People Online' leaflet which covers the same areas as the presentation, can be easily printed and is also available in 12 additional languages here: www.childnet.com/resources/supporting-young-people-online.

***Things to print out in advance of delivering this session:** Parent information sheet, 'Supporting Young People Online' sheet, Conversation starters.

*Note: This presentation covers a number of different online risks, including that of sexting. Depending on the audience of parents/carers you are presenting to, you may wish to amend these slides to focus on the risks that are most relevant to your school/setting.



Slide 1

Safer Internet Day in the UK is run by the UK Safer Internet Centre and this year's theme is 'Be the change: Unite for a better internet'. This theme has been chosen as an empowering message to all internet users and young people to use the internet positively and safely, with consideration and respect for others.

The sub-theme for the UK is 'The Power of Image', focusing on the ways that we use images and videos online to communicate and share messages, to entertain and to learn. Images can empower young people to build their online reputation, to spread positivity and to communicate respectfully. However, what they see online has the potential to negatively affect young people; this presentation explores some of those risks and aims to provide practical advice on how you can support your child to be safe and positive online.



Slide 2

The internet is an amazing resource which enables children and young people to connect, communicate and be creative in a number of different ways, on a range of devices. However, the internet is always changing, and being able to keep up to date with your children's use of technology can be a challenge. You may sometimes feel that your children have better technical skills than you do, however children and young people still need advice and protection when it comes to managing their lives online and using the internet positively and safely.

It is becoming increasingly common for children and young people to communicate online using photos and videos. Many new social networks, apps and services have become popular with young people over the last few years because of the ease with which they allow users to create, edit and share their photos and videos.



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Here are some statistics to provide some insight into just how popular image creation and sharing is:

- Images and videos get 8,500 likes and 1,000 comments per second on Instagram
- 1.8 million images are uploaded to the internet every day
- 400 million snaps (photos) are sent on Snapchat every day
- On Instagram, photos showing faces are 38% more likely to get 'likes' than photos without faces.
- 300 million photos are uploaded to Facebook every day



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There are many reasons and motivations behind why people may create and share their photos and videos online.

It could be to capture events and share memories of things that have happened to them, their family or friends. Facebook's 'On This Day' feature reminds users of what they posted on Facebook in the past, encouraging them to share the memory again with friends.

For some users, photos and videos are a way of gaining attention; this could be through attracting comments, 'likes', friends or followers. The attention gained varies depending on what has been posted or shared, and the motives for gaining this attention can also vary e.g. for celebrities, attracting attention might help strengthen their own brand image. For some users, it provides opportunity to advertise a product or service. For others, it might be a chance to raise awareness about a particular issue or viewpoint.

Whatever the motivation, attracting attention online can have also an impact on a person's mood and wellbeing. It has the potential to boost confidence or give someone the feeling that they or their views are respected by others online. However, there is potential to affect someone if other people make negative comments about their images, if the images reveal too much personal information or if they have a negative impact on someone's reputation.



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Images and videos shared online contain a lot of information that can affect young people in a number of ways. Sharing photos online can be an extremely positive and empowering experience for children and young people but it is important that they are aware of the potential risks that come with sharing images online; particularly images of themselves such as selfies.

Talking to your child about these risks, how they manage them and what to do if they are worried is key to supporting them to make positive choices and stay safe online.

Sharing a photo online can present the following risks:

- **The story** – The phrase ‘A picture paints a thousand words’ is very true of photos shared online. Young people should be aware that while they know the stories behind the images they share online, not everyone else does. This can lead to things being misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- **The message** – Images are a very powerful way of conveying messages, ideas and thoughts. Again, these can be misunderstood or challenged online by others. An image or meme that shares a joke might be very funny to the person who created or shared it, but might not be appreciated by others who see it and could even be considered offensive. Photos can be edited or altered to change their meaning; which could lead to funny photo becoming an offensive photo.

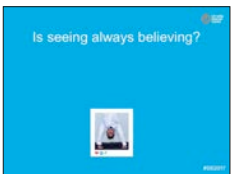
Photos can also be used to advertise a product or service, promote or endorse a particular behaviour or lifestyle choice.

- **Online reputation** – The behaviour of young people in the photos they take and share online, and the comments they post about others’ photos on social media, can be seen by others, sometimes even publicly to everyone who uses the internet. What they do could be perceived as positive or negative depending on the image and the context. Positive images can help build a reputation; negative impressions can destroy one. Encourage your child to show their best side online by thinking about how other people online will see their image.
- **Pressure** – Images can be used to pressure others into behaving a certain way or to glamorise risk taking. For young people this pressure from peers or others can be difficult to manage; not joining in or rising to the challenge that others have laid down may result in them being excluded from groups online or subjected to negative comments and criticism.
- **Personal information** – A photo of a young person in their school uniform can convey a huge amount of personal information such as their school address, their appearance, gender and possible age. Backgrounds in photos can also give away other clues as to where a young person is or where they might often go.
- **Location data** – Photos taken on most smartphones, tablets and newer digital cameras can also capture information about where and when a photo was taken. This information is stored within the image and is known as geotagging. Using software, the location details can be extracted from a photo and give a user the exact coordinates of where the photo was taken.

Locations can also be revealed when posting an image online if the site/service allows you to include a location with the photo.

Both of these can provide additional information about a young person’s movements offline and provide enough detail for someone to track them down to make contact with them offline too.

- **Contact from others** – Posting a photo or image encourages other people to give feedback. This could be by ‘liking’ the photo, sharing it on, posting a comment or by sending a message. Depending on the image posted, the comments received can vary. Some images are posted to provoke a reaction (positive or negative) and some are posted without thinking about the possible consequences. An image could be shared with a small group of trusted friends online or publicly to a large online community. This may invite comments and unwanted contact from strangers.
- **Reality or fantasy** – It is very easy to crop, edit and alter images online before sharing them so that the final image shows something different to the original. These could be subtle differences or very large changes that also alter the meaning of the image. Some photos may have been staged to capture an event that didn’t really happen, or edited to portray something that would be impossible in real life...



Slide 6

**This slide transitions to show the full image when the slide is advanced.*

Is seeing always believing online? What do you think is happening in this photo?

(Advance slide)

As we can see, sometimes there is more going on than we get to see online! Encouraging young people to think critically about what they see online is very important to help them recognise when something is misleading or trying to alter their views.



Slide 7

Filters and apps that can edit photos are very easy to use and can dramatically alter images. On the left you can see the original photo, and on the right is the edited version.

What changes can you see?

(Answers may include:

- Application of make up
- Filter
- Shape of eyebrows
- Shape of face, cheekbones and chin
- Size and colour of eyes
- Complexion and smoother skin)

It is important for young people to consider not only how photos may be altered, but also the effect these photos can have on their wellbeing and self-esteem. Social media provides the opportunity for many people (including celebrities) to portray themselves in an unrealistic light. For young people who see a lot of carefully crafted and edited images online, there is the potential for them to feel less happy or satisfied with their own appearance or experiences, or to lose confidence in themselves.

The Girls' Attitudes Survey 2016 by Girlguiding found that 37% of girls aged 11-21 compared themselves to celebrities most of the time or often. The same survey found 15% of 7-10 year olds and over half (54%) of 11-16 year olds often felt that they are not pretty enough.



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The next two slides cover practical advice and steps that you can take to support your child with the issues raised so far. The advice has been sorted into three categories; Content (what we see online), Conduct (how we behave online) and Contact (how others might communicate with us).

Content:

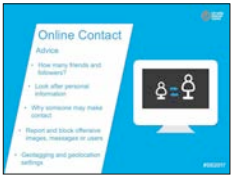
- **Discussion** – Talk to your child about what they see and experience online; what do they like? Are there things they see that they don't like? The Conversation Starters sheet contains some ideas for how you might start a chat on this topic.

Remind them that they can always speak to you or another trusted adult if they ever see anything online that confuses, upsets or worries them.

- **Critical thinking** – Encourage your child to be a critical thinker and learner online. They should not take any images or information at face value and should consider who shared the image and the message they were trying to share.
- **Thinking about feeling** – Remind your child it is okay to have an opinion and feel things about what they see online. However, if they are seeing things that are making them feel worse rather than better then they should talk to someone (ideally a trusted adult) about how it made them feel. For older children, they may prefer to speak to a best friend first, so also encourage your child to be a positive and supportive friend.

Conduct:

- **Think before you post** – Remind your child that others may see what they post and share online and that they have control over what they post. Once something is uploaded or shared online, you lose control and it is very straightforward for someone to copy or screengrab an image or comment. Even after you take down the original image, that copy may still be online and can affect how other people feel and react.
- **How does their behaviour affect others?** – Is a young person posting positively and respectfully, or are they posting or sharing around anything that could be deemed inappropriate, offensive or hateful? Young people should be conscious of how their words and actions affect others online.
- **Build an online reputation** – Encourage your child to use the internet as a platform for showcasing their skills and qualities. Images provide a fantastic opportunity to publicly demonstrate artistic and creative talents, photography skills, sporting achievements, and other hobbies, interests or experiences. As children move on from school to further education or work, it is common practice for potential employers or admissions officers for universities to search for young people online to see what sort of reputation they have. Posting positive content is a great way to ensure that others will be left with a good first impression.
- **Privacy settings** – A good way to control who can see what you post and share online is to make use of the privacy tools and settings on social networks. Checklist guides for using these settings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat can be found on the UK Safer Internet Centre website.



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Contact:

- **Friends and followers** – Discuss with your child the importance of choosing who gets to follow them or add them as a friend on social media and games. Some young people may attempt to collect as many followers as possible and this can result in sharing images to a large audience of people, including strangers. Keeping contact lists made up of people they trust is a good way of ensuring their photos are not seen more widely.
- **Look after personal information** – Young people need to recognise the importance of looking after their information online by thinking before they share a photo, and using privacy settings to control who will see it.
- **Why someone may make contact** – Sharing photos and videos online can often invite comments and contact from others, including strangers, so encourage your child to consider the motivation behind the message. Has someone commented on their photo to genuinely say something positive, or are they making contact to try and gain their trust?
- **Geotagging and geolocation settings** – Investigate the location settings in apps and on devices that allow you to prevent an app from sharing a location with an upload or post. Geotagging settings are often found in the camera settings on a mobile device.
- **Report and block** – Remind your child that if they see anything offensive or upsetting online then they should report that content or user to the service. Young people should always tell a trusted adult if they are worried about anything online that has worried or upset them.

If you suspect that a child or young person has been the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person, it's vital that you report it to the police or CEOP Command of the National Crime Agency (www.ceop.police.uk)



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A further risk associated with sharing images online is that of ‘sexting’; which most commonly involves taking a nude or sexually explicit image of yourself and sharing it with someone else.

This behaviour can occur because a young person is exploring sexuality, or being pressured by a partner or peers to take images or obtain images of someone else.

A 2016 study requested by the NSPCC and Children’s Commissioner for England found that 1 in 7 young people revealed they had created a naked or semi naked image of themselves, with just over half of those going on to share that image with others online.

There are a number of risks associated with this behaviour:

- **The Law** – If someone under the age of 18 creates, distributes or is possession of an indecent image/video of a child, this is illegal under **the Protection of Children Act (1978) in England and Wales / The Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 / Protection of Children Order (1978) in Northern Ireland.**
(select as appropriate)
- **UK Police** – The former Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) of England, Wales and Northern Ireland stated that young people engaging in sexting should not face prosecution as first time offenders, but the situation will be investigated to ensure that the young people involved are not at risk. Repeat offenders and more extreme cases are reviewed differently, still with a focus on avoiding prosecution unless absolutely necessary. However, an investigation will likely involve interviewing young people and others involved in the incident and seizure of devices that contain the indecent content, and this can be a very distressing experience for the young people involved.
- **Emotional and Psychological damage** – If the image has been shared with others online then this can lead to a young person becoming very upset and anxious about who has seen it, where it has been shared, and the comments that have been made by other online users. Because images can easily be shared online, there is the potential for images to remain online for a long time in many locations, and this is also very distressing.
- **Reputational damage** – Because the image may exist in a number of places online, it has the potential to negatively affect a young person’s reputation if it is seen by others (e.g. friends, family, online users). For older teenagers, if the image ends up being linked to as a search result when someone types their name into a search engine such as Google, then other people could see it in the future e.g. university admissions officers or potential employers.
- **Online manipulation/extortion** – Other online users may take a copy of an image to use against a young person as blackmail or to extort money or further images/videos.



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Advice:

- It is important to discuss these risks with your child to help them be aware of what can happen and to appreciate that this behaviour is something to be discussed as part of sex and relationships, consent and peer pressure; not just online safety.
- If you have concerns that a child has created and shared these types of images then it is important to take action and contact your child's school for help. Schools have strong relationships with local police forces and other services that provide additional support to safeguard children.
- Young people can download the Zipit app from Childline for iPhone, Android and Blackberry smartphones to help deal with unwanted requests for sexting images. The app allows them to send a premade funny meme (picture) back, and this sends a clear signal back that they are not willing to engage in this behaviour. Using humour to make light of these requests can also be effective in dealing with the situation.
- The UK Safer Internet Centre has produced a guide about sexting for young people, 'So You Got Naked Online', which contains practical information and advice on what steps they can take if an image has been created and shared. The guide also directs young people to sources of help and support.
- If you suspect that a child or young person has been coerced by an adult online to create and send indecent images of themselves then this should also be reported to the Police or CEOP (www.ceop.police.uk)



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(You may not wish to discuss all of these as they all feature on the 'Supporting Young People Online' sheet. You can always select a few to focus on.)

- There are real advantages in maintaining an open dialogue with your child about their internet use, encourage them to talk to you about their time online; for example who they're talking to, what services they are using, and any issues that they may be experiencing.
- Create a family agreement to establish your children's boundaries, and your expectations, when on the internet. Give your child strategies to deal with any online content that they are not comfortable with – such as turning off the screen, telling an adult they trust and using online reporting facilities. A template agreement and guide can be downloaded from www.childnet.com/have-a-conversation
- Consider using filtering software to block unwanted content. In addition to filtering, remember that discussion with your child, and involvement in their internet use, are both effective ways to educate them about the internet.
- Encourage your children to 'think before you post.' Online actions can impact not only yourself but the lives of others. Content posted privately online can be publicly shared by others, and may remain online forever.
- Understand the law. Some online behaviour may break the law, for example when comments online threaten or incite hatred.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings and reporting features available on popular sites and services.
- If your child is being bullied online, save all available evidence and know where to report the incident, for example to the school, service provider, or the police if the law has been broken.
- Make sure you know how to get help from service providers, your child's school or other organisations if you have concerns about a child.
- Watch the Safer Internet Day TV (SID TV) clips for more tips and advice at www.saferinternetday.org.uk



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Thank you for listening! To stay up to date and to find out more you can use social media to follow or get in touch with the UK Safer Internet Centre or you can email Childnet directly.