



Purely for parents



The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre does not wish to scare parents and their children. The internet is a fantastic resource with amazing communication and research possibilities. Unfortunately, it can also be used by individuals who have inappropriate intentions towards young people. We wouldn't stop our children from using the library or reading books and, in the same way, it would be wrong to stop them from using the internet. New technology is part of children's educational and life experience in the modern age. Those who care for them need to ensure that they have the knowledge to keep them safe and an understanding of what to do if things go wrong.

If your child reports concerns to CEOP, you may or may not be told about it. The way that each case is dealt with very much depends on the nature of the report, the type of activity reported and the attitude of the child reporting. Every report received is assessed on the content, and the child's understanding of what they are reporting. However, CEOP do work within certain guidelines with respect to this. One of these is that if your child is under the age of 13, CEOP will speak with parents and explain what has been reported by the child. If a child is over the age of 13, CEOP will reply directly back to the child. There may be exceptions to this rule however and decisions will be made on circumstances relating to individual children. For example, if a child reports that their MSN account has been hacked into, CEOP will reply directly to the child and provide them with the advice and guidance necessary. If a child indicates concerns relating to a parent or carer, the appropriate child protection processes will take effect and the relevant professionals informed. What CEOP can say though is that if the report is about illegal activity or there is a risk to your child, the appropriate police force will be notified and will be in touch to discuss the report.

Contents

1. What are the risks to children and young people online?
2. What is online grooming?
3. How would I know if my child was being groomed?
4. If my child adds someone to their buddy list on Instant Messenger, can that person see my child's contacts?
5. Should I move the computer from the bedroom?
6. Should we as parents report all our concerns to CEOP?
7. How do I remove something that my child has uploaded to the internet?
8. What filtering software should I use?
9. Why are there not specific security checks for children when they create an online profile in social networking sites?
10. What are the internet service providers (ISP's) doing to protect my child whilst they are using their site?

Further information



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01





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1. What are the risks to children and young people online?

- Paedophiles using the internet to meet young people
- People lying to others online
- Bullying using the internet
- Seeing sexually explicit and inappropriate pictures
- Viruses and pop-ups

This information sheet will focus specifically on paedophiles and how they use the internet to meet young people. For more information on the other risks young people face, please see the websites at the end of this question sheet.

3. How would I know if my child was being groomed?

There is no way of knowing without speaking to your child if they are engaged in an appropriate relationship but there are some behaviours to look out for:

- Excessive use of the computer;
- Aggressive behaviour regarding internet usage;
- Secretive behaviour;
- Change in use of sexual language.

If you are concerned, talk to your child and review the sites they have been visiting.

2. What is online grooming?

Online grooming is:

'A course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes'

Sexual Offences Act, 2003

Often, adults who want to engage children in sexual acts, or talk to them for sexual gratification will seek out young people who desire friendship. They will often use a number of grooming techniques including building trust with the child in more intimate forms of communication, including compromising a child with the use of images and webcams. Child sex abusers will often use blackmail and guilt as methods of securing a meeting with the child.

4. If my child adds someone to their buddy list on Instant Messenger, can that person see my child's contacts?

No. If your child adds someone to their contact list, that person will not be able to access the rest of their contacts.





Purely for parents



5. Should I move the computer from the bedroom?

CEOP advise that if there is a computer in the bedroom it should be moved to a family room, i.e. a living room or dining room. This encourages children to make their online behaviour a family activity and can encourage them to be less secretive. Children are less likely to engage in risky behaviour if they know their parents carers are able to view their screens and this is especially relevant if children are communicating via webcams.

6. Should we as parents report all our concerns to CEOP?

If you have concerns that your child has been engaged online by someone behaving suspiciously, you should speak to your child first. Alternatively, you can speak to your local police - they will be able to begin an investigation if required and, if necessary, they will approach CEOP for further assistance. You should only report to CEOP if you have suspicions that your child is being groomed or is arranging to meet someone.

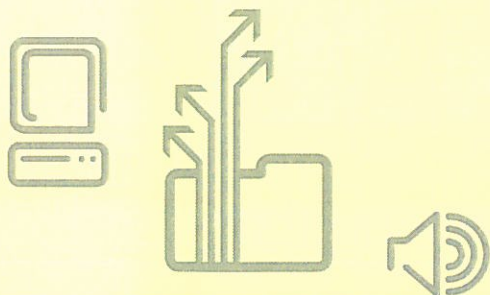
7. How do I remove something that my child has uploaded to the internet?

If your child has uploaded something to the internet and it is within their online profile, they can delete it. If something has been uploaded and is not within your child's profile and you believe it should be removed, you will need to speak to the service provider. They have contact details on the sites, usually within the help or contact sections.

8. What filtering software should I use?

Filtering software is not 100% effective in keeping inappropriate content from your computer however, it is a good idea to use it in conjunction with CEOP safety advice. Internet service providers (ISP's) have their own filtering software's and these should be used also. There are a number of different websites that you can use to get filtering software for your computers. You can also go to www.getnetwise.org where you can get definitions for things you may have heard of but may not understand.

Similarly, no monitoring software is 100% effective and should not be seen as a substitute to becoming involved in your children's use of the internet. However, there are some good products available for you to use. Have a look at www.getnetwise.org for a list of the best products available.





Purely for parents



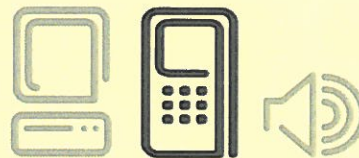
9. Why are there not specific security checks for children when they create an online profile in social networking sites?

At present there is no legislation with regards to how children create online profiles, but there are guidelines that should be followed. Some sites say children must be over a certain age, but children can easily use a different date of birth to get around this. Some sites also ask for a parent's email address to verify the information given by the child, but this again is not mandatory. CEOP are working with the UK Government and key online industry providers to look at how these sites operate in this regard.

10. What are the internet service providers (ISP's) doing to protect my child whilst they are using their site?

Some internet service providers (ISP's) have already embedded CEOP's Report Abuse mechanism within their sites allowing children to report any suspicious behaviour directly to trained officers. This is a good step forward, but there is still a long way to go. CEOP will continue to work with industry to ensure sites children are using are as safe as they can be.

Further information



www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Gives advice and guidance for parents on new technologies and safe use of the internet for their children, provided by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre

www.schools.becta.org.uk

Provides information for schools and parents on safe use of the internet. Becta leads the national drive to improve learning through technology. They work with industry to ensure the right technology for education is in place.

www.childnet-int.org

A children's internet charity committed to helping make the internet a safe place for children, this provides safety advice, projects, resources and a section for children.

www.iwf.org.uk

The only recognised organisation in the UK operating an internet 'hotline' for the public and IT professionals to report their exposure to potentially illegal content online.



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