

# The Importance of

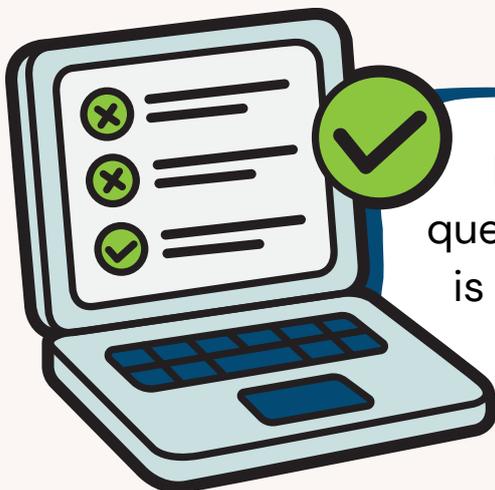
## ONLINE SAFETY 🔍

### Why It Matters



The internet offers incredible opportunities for learning, creativity and connection – but it also comes with risks. Young people spend more time online than ever – studying, gaming, and socialising. For students with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), online spaces can be a great way to connect and learn.

However, they can also be confusing or unsafe without clear guidance.



Helping your child to understand, question and protect themselves online is one of the most valuable digital life skills you can teach.





# Common Risks



## How to Support your Child

Risk Area	What It Means	How You Can Help
Inappropriate Content	Violence, hate speech, or upsetting material	Use parental controls; talk calmly if they see something that worries them
Fake News & Misinformation	False or misleading stories, edited images, or fake 'facts' shared online	Encourage critical thinking – ask 'Who wrote this?' 'Is this a trusted source?' 'Does it sound too extreme or emotional?'  Use fact checking sites like BBC Reality Check, Newsround, or Full Fact.
In-App Purchases and Scams	Games or apps that encourage spending money on items, skins or upgrades	Turn off in-app purchases in device settings. Use gift cards rather than bank cards. Talk about why ads or pop-ups try to make you spend money
Online Bullying or Grooming	Unkind messages, manipulation, or pressure from others online	Keep communication open – reassure your child they can always tell you or a trusted adult. Report bullying through the app or CEOP if needed.
Digital Footprint and Privacy	The record of everything your child shares or posts online	Help them to understand that once something is online, it can be hard to delete, Encourage 'Think Before you Post' and check privacy settings regularly.

# UNDERSTANDING

FAKE

NEWS

Fake news can be spread very quickly, especially on apps like TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram where short videos and headlines grab attention.

## Signs Something Might be Fake

- ✓ The story makes you feel angry, shocked or emotional
- ✓ There are no trusted sources (like BBC, Sky, NHS etc.) linked
- ✓ The website address looks odd (e.g. .co.biz or spelling errors)
- ✓ The image or video looks edited or taken out of context
- ✓ The same post appears in many places but with different facts.

## How Parents and Carers Can Help

- ★ Encourage your child to pause before sharing something
- ★ Show them how to search the same story on another reliable website

Use websites like:

- ★ BBC Newsround – child-friendly current affairs
- ★ Full Fact – UK fact-checking website
- ★ Google Reverse Image Search – to check if images are real or reused.

# IN-APP PURCHASES

## and Online Spending

Many games are free to download – but are not free to play. They may encourage spending on:

- ▶ New levels, outfits, or 'skins'
- ▶ Loot boxes or mystery rewards
- ▶ Time-saving boosts



## Risks

- ➡ Children might not realise it's real money
- ➡ Some games use bright colours and pressure tactics to make players spend
- ➡ In-game purchases can quickly build up costs

## How Parents and Carers Can Help

- Turn off in-app purchases on your child's device
- Set spending limits or require passwords for purchases
- Talk about advertising and manipulation – explain that the game is designed to make people want to spend
- Play the game together – understanding how it works helps you to set the rules
- Use family accounts with controls through Apple, Google or Xbox Family Settings.

# DIGITAL

# FOOTPRINT



Your digital footprint is everything you post, share, comment on, or even 'like' online – and it never fully disappears.

It can affect how others see you, including schools, colleges or future employers.



## Why It Matters

- Colleges, apprenticeship providers and employers sometimes check online profiles
- Even deleted posts or messages can be screenshotted or archived
- Posts made at 13 could still be visible years later.

## What to Talk About

- ? **Think Before You Post:** Would you want a teacher, family, or future boss to see this?
- ? **Be Kind Online:** Mean words can stick around and hurt others.
- ? **Check Privacy Settings:** Share personal stuff only with real friends.
- ? **Keep Personal Info Private:** Don't share your full name, school, or contact details.
- ? **Clean Up Accounts:** Delete old accounts and apps you don't use.

# ONLINE BULLYING

## And Grooming

Online bullying (also known as cyberbullying) is when someone uses the internet, games, or phones to hurt, embarrass or exclude another person.



For young people with SEND needs, this can be especially difficult to recognise or handle because they might:

- Take messages very literally
- Struggle to understand sarcasm or tone
- Want to please others or be accepted
- Find it hard to tell when a 'friend' online is unkind or unsafe.



# How Parents and Carers Can Help



## Create an open atmosphere

- Encourage your child to talk about their online life just like their school day
- Praise them for sharing anything that worries them, no matter how small



## Stay calm and supportive

- If your child experiences bullying, reassure them it's not their fault
- Avoid taking away their device immediately – this can feel like punishment.



## Keep Evidence

- Take screenshots of hurtful messages and posts
- Record usernames, app names and times if you need to report it



## Block and Report

- Every app, website or game has tools to block users and report abuse
- Show your child how to use them, or do it together

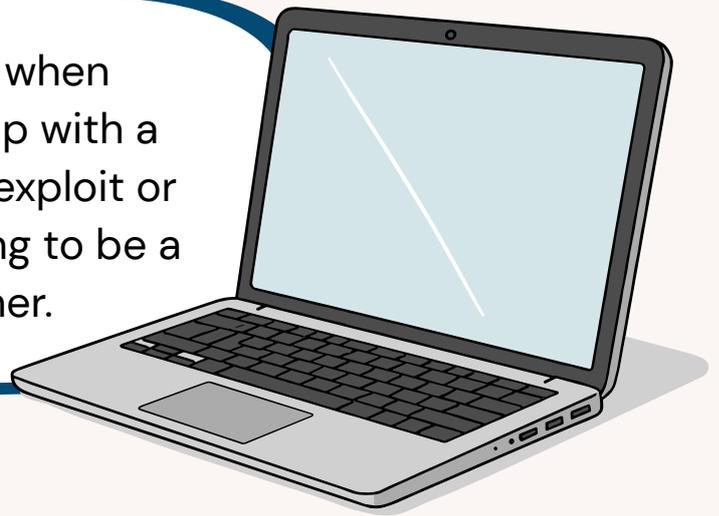


## Get help from school and trusted adults

- School must take online bullying seriously under their safeguarding duties
- You can also report to the police if threats or illegal activity occur.

# RECOGNISING GROOMING AND ONLINE EXPLOITATION

Online grooming happens when someone builds a relationship with a young person to manipulate, exploit or abuse them – often pretending to be a friend or romantic partner.



## Groomers may:

- Pretend to be someone the same age
- Offer gifts, money or attention
- Ask for private photos or videos
- Try to move the conversation to a private space
- Encourage the young person to keep secrets

## Signs a child is being groomed online

- Becoming secretive about online activity
- Spending more time alone online
- Receiving money or gifts from unknown sources
- Suddenly having new friends or contacts
- Upset, anxious or defensive when asked about online behaviour

# TALKING ABOUT GROOMING

# AND ONLINE EXPLOITATION

It's important to talk calmly and clearly – not to scare, but to prepare.

## Tips



**“Sometimes people online pretend to be kind, but they might have bad intention. If anyone ever asks you for private photos, wants to meet secretly, or makes you uncomfortable, tell me straight away – you won’t be in trouble”**

- Teach them the **'STOP – BLOCK – TELL'** rule: **STOP** talking to the person, **BLOCK** them, **TELL** a trusted adult
- Remind them to never share personal details – full name, school address or photos
- Encourage them to only talk to real-life friends online
- Keep devices in shared spaces where possible.

## Key Messages for Parents and Carers

- Be involved – not intrusive; talk regularly about online life
- Guide, don't punish – encourage openness when mistakes happen
- Empower, don't frighten – teach critical thinking and resilience
- Celebrate positives – technology can build independence, skills and friendships when used safely.

# Worried about a Young Person's Online Activity?

If you are concerned about a young person's safety online, help and advice are available.

## Immediate danger



- Call **999** if a young person is at immediate risk of harm

## Report concerns about online abuse or grooming

- Report online grooming, sexual exploitation, or inappropriate contact with a child.
- Reports are made securely and reviewed by specialist officers.

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

## Get advice and support

- **NSPCC Helpline**  
**0808 800 5000**    [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)  
Advice for adults worried about a young person's safety online or offline.

**If something doesn't feel right, it's always better to report concerns early. You do not need proof to ask for help.**



# The Importance of Online Safety for Young People with SEND



## Funded by

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## Delivered by

NYBEP believe every young person deserves to feel confident in who they are and where they're going. We use our knowledge, expertise, and understanding of people to connect education and employers so that young people have the self-belief to shape their future.

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