

Engaging Families in Online Safety: Guidance for Educational Settings

Why do some parents not engage with online safety?

Concerns about insufficient computer skills or a limited understanding about the online environment can be off-putting and sometimes frightening for parents/carers. Many parents believe that their children know more about the internet and technology than they do, and this can sometimes be a difficult issue to overcome. It is important to remind parents that online safety is more about parenting and communication skills than technology.

Alternatively, some families may think they already do enough to protect their children by banning certain games or sites and installing filters or antivirus software onto home devices. Unfortunately, this approach does not acknowledge that children could access the internet elsewhere or may intentionally bypass systems without parent's knowledge.

Banning and blocking is not the answer. When working with parents, try to highlight the importance of maintaining open discussions and empowering children to make safer and more sensible choices online.

What are the key messages we should be sharing with parents?

How and what are children accessing online

- Highlight the range of different devices that have access to the internet and what children are using them for; e.g. mobile phones, games consoles and tablets - not just computers.
- Ensure your information is up-to-date and relevant to your audience- you may find it helpful to survey the children for accurate information about the latest apps and games they like to use then look at www.net-aware.co.uk to investigate what they do.

The internet has its good points

- Ensure that you balance your approach and don't just terrify parents; it's important to acknowledge that for most children, their experiences and interactions online are positive!

Don't over rely on blocks and filters

- Remind parents that blocks and filters are never 100% and children may actively bypass these if they feel restricted or don't understand why they are in place.
- Highlight the importance of empowering children to be risk aware and telling a trusted adult when they are worried.

Practical advice and resources

- Provide practical tips for online safety in the home, such as how to use filters, parental controls, etc. Make sure you also signpost to useful websites for parents to access online safety information in their own time (*see useful links and resources*).
- When advertising online safety events, try to avoid using terms such as 'ICT', 'e-safety' or 'technology' as this may be off-putting for some parents/carers.

Setting policies and procedures

- Whether you're referring to cyberbullying or youth produced sexual imagery, inform parents of the internal procedures that are in place to support them and their child. Ensure they

know how to access the right policies and who they can contact in the setting for assistance (i.e. named designated safeguarding lead).

How do we run an effective online safety presentation for parents?

Parental awareness sessions are a valuable opportunity to provide families with advice and support; however, attendance at these types of events can vary, so they should not be used in isolation.

To ensure the best turn out at your event, consider the following suggestions:

Make it convenient

- Ensure as many parents as possible can attend by asking them when they would prefer the session to be offered, Coffee mornings allow parents to attend just after the school run and can save them an extra journey, whilst evening sessions may better accommodate families who work during the day. Some settings also “record” sessions so it is available to parents who could not attend in person.

Invitations and reminders

- Send out invitations in advance to all parents/carers via printed letter, text/SMS and/or email. Send out a few reminders leading up to the event, ideally with different content, to encourage parents to attend. A directly addressed letter may help engage parents so why not get the children to write letters to their own parents.

Publicity and posters

- Highlight the event in a variety of ways, e.g. setting website, official social media, and/or newsletters. Display posters in public areas, such as reception, playgrounds and notice boards. You may also wish to open your event to the local community and advertise in local Children Centres, shops or local press.

Surveys and quizzes

- Survey the children about their online experiences; collate the statistics and use these to advertise the importance of your event. National statistics and research are also available at: www.saferinternet.org.uk/research/research-highlight-series.
- Alternately, you may wish to quiz your parents to find out how much they know (or don't know) about keeping their children safe online, to encourage them to attend.

'Freebies' and refreshments

- Try enticing parents with a raffle, 'freebies' or a reward for attending; parents could be offered discounts to school events or entered into a prize draw. Providing refreshments is also a good idea (e.g. tea/coffee/cake or wine/cheese- depending on the time of day!).
- Alternatively, you could consider offering a simultaneous event (such as a free cinema club or disco) exclusively for children whose parents attend the online safety event.

External visitors

- It is important that settings demonstrate internal capacity for delivering online safety inputs; external speakers should be used to compliment your event, rather than relied upon to deliver inputs alone. Access the UKCCIS 'External Visitors' guidance to help inform your decision making: www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis .

Don't be put off

- If your first event has lower than expected attendance, don't let it put you off trying again. You may wish to adjust the time or location, but rest assured that if you delivered it right, word will spread, and the numbers should increase in the future.

How else do we engage parents and carers with online safety?

Parents and carers can be a hard-to-reach audience, but one-off events are not the only way to raise the profile of online safety.

Embed online safety across the school community with some of these suggestions:

Involve the children

- One of the best methods of engaging parents is to use something their child is performing in, has written or made. Why not get the children to put on their own online safety event or play which parents can be invited to? Sessions led by pupils are a great way to facilitate "pupil voice" but can often have a greater impact and higher attendance than those delivered by external visitors.

Regular communication

- Try not to overwhelm parents with too much information in one go! Use regular communication channels, such as, newsletters, emails, texts or letters home to share up-to-date online safety advice; this could include, weekly "tips" current trends or useful resources. Consider asking the children to write reviews on their favourite games or share their top tips for online safety.

Linking in with other events

- If you find that attendance for specific online safety events is low, or you don't seem to be reaching the right parents, consider integrating it into another event that parents are likely to attend; for example, summer/Christmas fetes, plays, transition evenings or open days. Sessions for parents don't have to be 'lectures'; instead you may wish to have an online safety display stand or drop in session for parents, with leaflets and information.

Co-operative learning

- What better way to encourage parents to engage with their child's online world, than learning and experiencing new things together! Some settings invite parents to join the children's lessons or workshops and others have offered open ICT sessions, where parents can explore useful websites and resources with their children.

Include links on the settings website

- Setting websites can be a great source of information for busy parents/carers; it is also one of the first places they will look for advice if they are concerned about their child. Include some online safety advice and links to other organisations or consider creating a stand-alone online safety page. Make sure you include links to your policies and provide the name and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Using social media

- When appropriately assessed and carefully managed, social media can offer settings a popular and easily accessible dynamic to normal communication methods. For guidance on setting up social media as a communication channel, see the "Using Social Media in

Education Settings” guidance on Kelsi: www.kelsi.org.uk/child-protection-and-safeguarding/e-safety

Involving parents/carers in forums and groups

- Online safety groups or forums can be a good way of incorporating the views of the whole community with regards to policy decisions and action planning, etc. Consider how parents/carers might be able to contribute and support this.
- If you already have an active parent or friends’ association, consider ways to involve them in online safety; they may be able to support events and activities as well as contributing to risk assessments and policy development.

Sharing your online safety policy

- An online safety policy provides an essential framework to develop the online safety ethos within the setting; it is vital that these policies are shared with parents/carers to ensure that they are adopted and upheld by the whole community. Some settings share the policy with parents and ask them to provide feedback, whilst others have developed condensed versions, which can be adapted and implemented at home.

Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) and Home-School Agreements

- Acceptable Use Policies provide a clear outline of acceptable/unacceptable behaviours, and are usually signed by pupils, staff and volunteers. However, it is helpful for parents to have an overview of these rules and ensure the messages they provide at home are consistent. You may also wish to adopt an AUP for parents; this is particularly relevant if you are considering introducing social media as a communication tool.
- Alternatively, you may wish to add reference to the online safety policy/acceptable use policy in the Home-School Agreement, stating that they will support the settings online safety ethos and behaviour management.

Think outside the box!

- When it comes to engaging parent/carers in online safety, you are only limited by your imagination. Below are a few more suggestions that came from settings themselves:
 - Use TVs and computer screens that are already dotted around the school to display online safety messages; for example, online safety posters as screensavers, a rolling presentation at the school office, or even playing online safety videos in the background at parents evening.
 - Parents vs. children quiz game at the school fete. Pitching the generations against each other works well for cooperative learning, but also makes them competitive! When the parents realised that they didn’t know as much as the children, they may be keen to get more information.
 - Social media coffee morning run by the PTA with support from children. Pupils used the setting iPads to show parents how to set up privacy and security settings. The children loved showing off and the adults received a valuable lesson.
 - Online safety “tip of the week”- classes take it in turns to create an online safety tip, or to review a new app or game; these are then published in the newsletter and on social media. This gives children a sense of achievement and encourages parents to read it.
 - Online safety storybooks are a great way to engage parents - we bought them as transition gifts. The children loved them and, of course, it also encourages parents to read to their children. *(For more storybook ideas, see: www.theeducationpeople.org/blog/online-safety-storybooks)*

Useful Links and Resources

Resources for delivering online safety presentation for parents:

www.internetmatters.org/schools-esafety/parent-online-support-pack-teachers

- Downloadable presentations along with posters and videos for parents/carers.

www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2017/education-packs/education-pack-parents-and-carers

- The UK Safer Internet Centre produced this scripted presentation, along with posters, and factsheets for Safer Internet Day 2017.

www.childnet.com/resources/know-it-all-for-parents/kiAFP-cd

- Know IT All for Parents is an interactive video guide for parents and carers produced by Childnet. This guide is better suited to small groups or a drop-in session, rather than a large audience.

www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/staff-led-online-safety-presentations-/staff-led-parent-online-safety-presentation

- Childnet have developed an online safety presentation for parents designed to be delivered internally by setting staff.

www.new.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/resources

- CEOP has a downloadable presentation for parents/carers. They also have a range of videos, including: "Where's Klaus", "Naked Selfies" and "Parents Guide to Technology" to make presentation more engaging,

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware

- The NSPCC have produced videos as part of their Share Aware campaign, which can provide an excellent discussion point for parents.

www.swgfl.org.uk/products-services/online-safety/resources/SWGfL-E-Safety-Movies

- The SWGfL videos "Do you know?" and "Golden Rules" can be downloaded to show during a presentation.

Links to share with parents and include on the setting website:

CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk

- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) are part of the National Crimes Agency (NCA) and specialise in investigating grooming and sexual abuse online. Their educational website www.thinkuknow.co.uk has a specific section with advice for parents/carers. The 'Click CEOP' report button provides a means of reporting abuse online and can be downloaded onto the setting website.



Kent Police: www.kent.police.uk

- Concerns about potential criminal offences online can be reported to Kent Police via 101 or 999. Kent Police also have online safety advice on their website: www.kent.police.uk/advice/online-safety/



The IWF: www.iwf.org.uk

- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is the UK hotline for reporting illegal online content, such as child abuse images, or material considered to be criminally obscene. The IWF actively works to identify and safeguard children involved, as well as getting illegal images and videos removed from the internet.



Parent Port: www.parentport.org.uk

- Run by the UK's media regulators, Parent Port enables parents and professionals to report inappropriate online material, such as videos, adverts or news articles.



Home Office: www.gov.uk/report-terrorism and www.educateagainsthate.com

- The government have introduced a button for reporting online material which promotes terrorism or extremism and an educational website with advice and information for parents.



NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety and www.net-aware.org.uk

- The NSPCC have teamed up with 02 to provide information and advice for parents, as well as a free online safety helpline. They have also produced Net Aware, where they have reviewed some popular apps young people are using, including age ratings and how easy it is to report problems.



Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org

- Internet Matters is a not-for-profit organisation working with online safety experts to provide advice and information for parents. It has an interactive tool which provides step by step guides to setting up parental controls on different devices, as well as video tutorials and guidance about specific concerns.



Childnet: www.childnet.com

- Childnet has a wealth of resources, including; leaflets, top tips, screen time guides, conversation starters and resources for parents/carers.



Parent Zone: www.theparentzone.co.uk and www.parentinfo.org

- Parent Zone provides up-to-date content on a variety of parenting concerns, including online safety. In collaboration with Vodafone, they have produced Digital Parenting magazine, which settings can order for free or can link to online. Settings can also sign up to host articles from CEOP and Parent Zone on their website for free:



UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk

- UK Safer Internet Centre provides advice and guidance on online safety. Their website is aimed at professionals, but their parent guides to technology and social media checklists are valuable resources to share with parents or link to on the school website: www.swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources



Get Safe Online: www.getsafeonline.org

- Get Safe Online covers practical information on protecting families against fraud, identity theft, viruses and other problems encountered online.



Additional links can be found at www.kelsi.org.uk/child-protection-and-safeguarding/e-safety/e-safety-useful-links