eSafety newsletter

Herts for Learning

Parent edition

Spring 2017

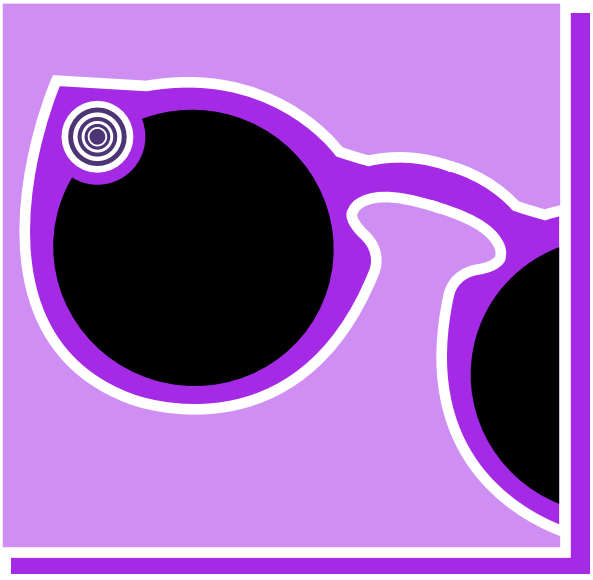
Cyberbullying

Ensuring your children understand the seriousness of cyberbullying is an essential part of modern parenting. There have been several recent reports of how this type of offence is increasing hugely (source: Childline). Information on cyberbullying can be found in many places but the NSPCC has some good statistics here: **http://bit.ly/NSPCCCB** . If you need confirmation that this is indeed a serious offence, you need not look far: **http://bit.ly/JB1407**

Bullying over social media is one of the most common problems, although sometimes the bullying can be from within a group on Whatsapp or similar; it isn't always completely public. Often the bullying can be 1:1 in the form of direct messaging too. One good resource can be found in the following link, a video created by Childline. Amy Louise's Story is an example of bullying over Facebook. For children attending primary school however, **this should not be a problem if** pupils are adhering to the age restrictions for these apps and services: **http://bit.ly/CLFBk**

Snapchat

As if we didn't need another reason to tell our children that they can't have Snapchat yet (it's a 13-plus app), they decide to launch affordable camera glasses for potentially very sneaky recordings. It is one thing to put people on the internet with their permission but altogether another to capture them without their knowledge and to upload without consent: **http://bit.ly/SnapSun**



Whatsapp

Historically, users of Whatsapp needed to be at least 16 years of age. Recently however, this age restriction has been lowered to 13 in line with the majority of similar digital communication tools. Despite this, parents should always be cautious when allowing their children to have unrestricted communication with others people - users can withhold or lie about their true identity. The extra three years of maturity which the old policy offered to its users (those who stuck to the rules at least) meant that grooming might have previously been identified by users more easily. Despite this, research suggested that even when Whatsapp had a 13 minimum age, 50% of its users were 12 or under. **www.whatsapp.com/legal**

Another aspect of this app worth considering is the soon-to-be available video chat option. **http://bit.ly/WA1id** This puts this app in line with the likes of Skype and Facetime, albeit safer than Oovoo – which adds multiple user video conferencing and brings with that further risks of friends accepting strangers into group conversations.

Watch out for Omegle & Chat Roulette

These **'video chat with strangers'** services are dangers for the obvious reason that you won't know who your children are talking to or seeing and vice versa. Information can be shared with complete strangers using these services and in many cases what would be seen or discussed will be inappropriate or in certain cases, illegal. There are, of course other non-video based apps to avoid such as Whisper, where users are encouraged to tell secrets to complete strangers who can then get them to release further personal information.

Ok I'm worried, what can I do?

As always, talk to your children. Tell them you won't take their devices away from them as a punishment for letting you know that they feel worried, frightened or scared about something they have seen or read online, or about what someone might be asking them to do. It might be hard not to take things away from them, you might feel like you are protecting them, but remember that children will learn from the experience and next time might think 'I can't tell Mum or Dad because they will take it off me again'. Tell them well done, reward them for telling you, fix the problem, then return the device to them as soon as possible. Crucially, tell them this is what will happen now, before they are in trouble.

Musical.ly

This is an app which is gaining in popularity within primary schools at a very fast rate indeed. Users can sing along to famous music artists, have friends, be followed and leave comments. Not so different from the majority of social media apps then? Consequently, whilst it can be fun, parents should be cautious and apply the same logic to this as with any other opportunity for their children to contact or be contacted by strangers. The 12+ on the appstore **suggests that parental support is necessary** yet Google Play does not have a minimum age restriction at this time – often the platforms do not agree with one another regarding age restrictions. On this basis, a self-imposed 13+ rule with many unclassified apps would be a reasonable child protection measure.

Useful websites

"I want to make it less likely that my children will get into trouble at home when online"

Find out how to make internet access safer at home on the Internet Matters website:
http://bit.ly/ParentCont

"I don't want people to see that when they search on the internet"

Find out how to ask Google to remove information from their search results here
http://bit.ly/RemInfo

"I have found a website that holds illegal content. How do I report it?"

Report illegal website content here:
https://www.iwf.org.uk

For further eSafety advice visit:
http://bit.ly/eSafetyAdviceforParents