

Kingston LSCB

Resources for parents, carers and professionals to support online safety and gaming: what to do if you are worried

The internet and all it can offer, is a wonderful tool for keeping in touch with friends and family, however parents and carers need to be aware that it is possible for people to find themselves in financial difficulties through using “pay for” websites or games; meeting unsuitable people online; or spending too much time in the “virtual world”.

The LSCB knows that online gaming is an attractive pastime for many young people. For most young people this does not lead to any concerns, however some parents, carers or professionals may become worried about a young person’s online safety. Many young people will have access to or own the latest gadgets such as tablets, smart phones and games consoles.

Some parents, carers or relatives might not realise that even games consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation are connected to the internet and can be used for communicating, as well as playing games. Whilst using these gadgets is second nature for many children and young people, they can seem quite daunting for parents or carers who may not be as technologically savvy. Some games and websites begin with no payments and then progress to requiring finances to access higher levels. Then it can be hard to stop playing.

- Talk to your children about what they are looking at, what games they are playing, and who they are talking to online;
- Remind them of the importance of not talking to or accepting friend requests from people they don’t know in real life;
- Set parental controls and privacy settings so that you can see and control what your child or young person is doing online via their device;
- Alert children and young people to the dangers of paying for games and other purchases online, and ensure that they only use credit cards or other payment methods with adult supervision;

- Encourage them to keep all personal information such as passwords, phone numbers, friend, school address details private;
- Remind them that people might not be who they say they are online. It is very easy for people to set up accounts, with fake names, identities and photos, to make us all believe that they are someone they are not;
- Warn them that the things they write and the photos they post online might be accessed by people other than their friends, if they don't keep their accounts private;
- Highlight the risks of meeting people in person that your child only knows online;
- Be alert to the child or young person becoming withdrawn, unhappy, fearful or irritable, or using devices during the night - these could be signs of online bullying, financial difficulties due to paying for games, sexual exploitation or gaming addictions;
- Try to encourage internet use in the home family living space, rather than in bedrooms and without supervision, or at night.

Find out more here:

Young Minds have a helpline for parents www.youngminds.org.uk.

Childnet International has video guides about setting up parental controls, which might be helpful when trying to reduce a child's exposure to gambling sites (though worth bearing in mind there are ways round them, and not always 100% effective). www.childnet.com/
www.saferinternet.org.uk/parental-controls

<http://www.lqfl.net/esafety/Pages/esafety-matrix.aspx> - many resources here regarding online safety, including gaming and gambling;

<http://www.saferinternet.org/online-issues/parents-and-carers/online-gaming> - advice about online gaming;

www.thinkuknow.co.uk – helpful internet support;

Most importantly, families can speak to their child's school and GP about mental health services and other support that might be available.

Find out more here: <http://kingstonandrichmondscb.org.uk/parents-carers/helping-your-child-stay-safe-online-16.php>

Always call 999 in an emergency.