

How to keep young people safe online while at home due to Coronavirus schools' closure and social distancing

With school closures, educators are currently looking at different ways in which young people can learn via remote learning. Inevitably, this will lead to young people spending more time online.

Being online, enables young people to connect, learn and be creative in a number of ways, however, it is essential that during this period that **young people are free from risk or harm**.

Educators still have a duty to safeguard young people, no matter where the learning environment may be.

Usual current safeguarding protocols to make sure whoever has access to young people for online learning must be continued. Anyone providing an online learning service must be trusted and vetted with all the current DBS and security checks and be part of a registered and trusted education provider.

Although young people are internet native and have better technical skills than most adults, they are **not always aware of the risks**, and with young people spending more time at home, they are likely to use social network sites or apps to reach out to others.

Whilst social networking can be useful for learning and keeping in contact. Young people may be feeling particularly scared or confused at this time and there's risk of an increased amount of misinformation and fake news. Whilst many people within communities are coming together to offer support and help. There will be those who will try to **exploit this situation**.

Young people still need guidance and protection when it comes to managing their lives online. Young people should be encouraged to only look for information from trusted and impartial news sources like the BBC and from trusted and registered education providers.

Other online harms and risks to young people, include; grooming, exploitation and bullying and these issues will impact on a young persons safety. These can also impact their mental health and wellbeing and make them vulnerable.

It's useful to get young people to **THINK** when they are receiving or sharing information, especially online.

T – is it true?

H – is it helpful?

I – is it inspiring?

N – is it necessary?

K – is it Kind?

Online groomers and extremists can use this time to target vulnerable young people and we are aware that extremist groups are using social media and online spaces to put out misinformation and promote their material.

Some families will have safeguards and rules in place to keep their young people **safe from harm online**, however, some won't. It's important that educators discuss safeguards and measures with parents/carers to make sure that these are in place or revisited.

Having appropriate filtering, set timeframes and agreed boundaries for young people can be a proactive measure to manage some online harm. Being open and honest with young people is good way of working with them to put this protection in place and in a way that the young person will be informed and likely to be more receptive of this advice.

By regularly communicating with young people and through transparent use of online devices/spaces the risk can be properly monitored and considered by educators and parent/carers at this time.

[The UK Safer Internet Centre](#) published the following [Safeguarding Advice for Remote Learning](#) and listed a set of safeguarding checks on how to keep young people safe online.

They also have an online Safety Helpline (0344 381 4772) where educators and professionals can get expert advice.

We will be following up this guidance with further information from the UK Safer Internet Centre and other online safety resources for children with a view to supporting schools and educational establishments to keep young people safe.

Stay safe and Kind Regards,

Sandwell Prevent Team