



# Computing News

Spring 2019

**Sue Tovell is a trainer for London CLC and a CEOP Ambassador. She promotes online safety for parents, vulnerable adults and children.** She led a workshop during Safer Internet Day on 5th February for parents and carers. We have outlined her main points in this newsletter.

## 'Over the top' technology

Our children, like us, are accessing the internet on a variety of devices: smart TVs, mobile phones, tablets, gaming consoles and laptops.

The internet assumes that everyone accessing content is equal. It assumes that every child is equal to an adult and that they have the same capacity to filter as an adult does.

**How do we control the content coming into our houses?** You are the filter for content entering your house unless you set it up differently. There are a few ways to do this:

### 1. Restrict devices with settings.

Most devices have the ability to restrict access to features. Search the internet for your device's guide.

### 2. Ask your internet provider to filter your WiFi.

Contact your provider and discuss what filters you want. There are issues with this: it sometimes restricts what you want to do and your child can still access the internet if they are at someone else's house.

### 3. Download third party apps.

There are a number of apps available: e.g. Samsung's 'Kid's Mode' restricts access when it is activated. You cannot swipe, call or access the internet; you need a code to do anything.

Be aware that children are adaptive and they may find a way around any restriction you put in place (for example, by tapping into a neighbour's WiFi).

## Are you a Limiter or a Mentor?

A Limiter sets strict limits on access to technology. A Mentor encourages and participates in technology use.

We want to be Mentors: adults who use the internet in a way that makes our children want to follow our example. The best way to do this is by keeping communication flowing and trusting them to make good decisions.

Being a Limiter is fine if your child is young. At some point, you need to transition into a Mentor otherwise your child will not be prepared to make good decisions when they are older.

Being a Mentor means developing good online habits ourselves. A good way to do this is to have an open conversation as a family to develop a **family agreement**. This will help you decide – as a household – some good online habits: e.g. what apps you agree to use and what time you agree to switch off the internet.

One way to do this is to get the whole family together. Ask everyone to be creative and draw the websites, apps and games they want. Making it a positive shared experience stops you becoming the bad person when you ask for their phones at night – because you have already agreed it together.

Include your extended family: ask older children (cousins and siblings) to be involved. Encourage them to be Mentors and spread the good practice. It is often these people who, by accident, introduce our children to content they are not yet ready to see.

The NSPCC's [net-aware.org.uk](http://net-aware.org.uk) website has a family agreement template that you can download. It also has a number of videos to view on internet safety.

*However, be mindful of the fact that the videos often stereotype predatory people online as older white males. In recent children's experience, this is not always the case. More often predatory people on the internet have been peers (other children and young people).*

## Let's talk about gaming

As parents, we should not stress too much about screen time if our child is interacting and chatting with friends. The concerns arise when they are sitting in isolation and not discussing what they are doing. Or when they are chatting with people they have only met online.

**The main problem with online gaming is that you only ever hear one side of the conversation.** You do not know what vocabulary your child is being exposed to. You do not know what they are being asked to do.

### So what can you do?

You can get involved in the game. Being a digital parent means investing time. If you put in the effort, they will appreciate it. Get yourself a headpiece and have a go at the game they are so keen on. Set up your own account and ask them how to play it. Get your head around why they love it so much. If it was a hobby, like the violin, you would be encouraging them by going to see them perform; so why not get involved in gaming?

If they know you understand why they love the game, your child is more likely to respect you when you say they have had enough time on it. Make sure you include a plan for gaming in your family agreement.

The case study on page two gives details what could happen if gaming is left unchecked.



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## What children say

In a 2015 study on the health impacts of screen time by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health:

- 88% of children said screen time had a negative impact on their sleep.
- 41% say it affected their play.
- 35% said it had a negative impact on their mood and **mental health**.

Children have a self-awareness that we do not give them credit for. They just need someone to pull them out of the loop – to give them boundaries; your family agreement will help you do this.

## In conclusion

Our online activities –the pictures and comments we post and share – have the potential to stay online forever.

It is up to us to ensure our children are aware of their online legacy and that it does not negatively impact on their future.

If you can get them thinking about their legacy at primary school, it will be much easier for them to maintain when they are teenagers and beyond.

## Top tips

- **Place age-appropriate restrictions on the devices your child uses.**
- **Have regular conversations with your child about what they are doing and what you are doing online.**
- **Create a family agreement together that you all stick to.**
- **Charge devices in a communal space like the kitchen.**
- **Place a ban on devices in bedrooms after 10pm.**

## Gaming: a case study

*One 14-year-old boy had his life taken by a predator he met online through gaming.*

*They had been gaming together and chatting live as they were playing. During this time, the predator had been grooming him.*

*His mother became aware of the situation and took the right steps: she confiscated all of his equipment and reported it to Surrey Police. However, Surrey Police did nothing about it.*

*A few months later, the boy arranged to meet the predator and was killed.*

*In interviews afterwards, his mother said that she wished she had reported it to CEOP as well as the Police.*

**A crucial point to this story is that the predator was 19 when he committed the crime. He had been displaying predatory behaviour online since he was 13. However, as he had never been checked, mentored or told how to behave online, his behaviour had escalated to this point.**

## Recommended apps

- **Kids iPlayer**  
Unlike the adult version, this app does not have an 'auto play' function and it does not recommend a next video to watch. This prevents children becoming hypnotised by a loop of videos.
- **Zipit** (from Childline) helps children respond to unwanted texts/requests for pictures with the power of GIFs. It has a flirting guide with helpful tips on how to navigate intimate chats to stay safe.
- **NetAware** lists all popular apps. It tells you the function of the app, what parents say about it and why children like it. It also has a 'news' feature, which gives you the latest news items about the app and rates the app for likelihood of bullying.

## Recommended websites

For more information and news about how to stay safe online:

- **ceop.police.uk** is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre.
- **www.thinkuknow.co.uk** has age-appropriate online safety tools.
- **commonsensemedia.org** provides unbiased information, ratings and advice on films and games.
- **internetmatters.org** aims to empower parents and carers.
- **nspcc.org.uk/share-aware** (with O2) tools for keeping safe online.
- **parentzone.org.uk/projects/digital-parenting-magazine** is Vodafone's Digital Parenting magazine.
- **5Rightsfoundation.com** campaigns to create a better digital world.

If you have any comments or queries about Computing at Handsworth, please contact us via the school office: [school@handsworth.waltham.sch.uk](mailto:school@handsworth.waltham.sch.uk).

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