



## Guidance for parents and carers

# Did you know?

**According to a recent You Gov report,  
when parents were asked about online gaming...**

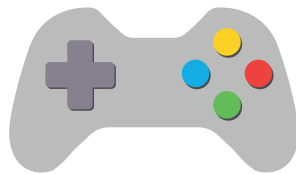
**50%**  
of parents



**said that they were worried  
about their child's internet use**

**However only...**

**20%**  
of parents



**engaged with their children in  
games online**

## **But, what does this mean...?**

**.... let's get engaging! As parents, it's important to be  
present with what your children are doing online to keep up  
to date - the online world changes quickly!**

The tips in this guidance will help in some ways to  
**safeguard your child online.**



# Contents

Aims of the guidance	4
Online safety issues for children	5
Ofcom 2021 – Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report	5
Apps, games and social media	6-10
Gaming and PEGI ratings	11-12
Messageboards and extremism	13
Ways to keep your child safe online	14
New and developing issues	15
Fake news	16
Clickbait	17
Online radicalisation	18
Possible signs of online radicalisation	19
Concerns for extremists trying to influence online	20
How do I talk to my child about being safe online?	21-22
Information and Prevent training support	24



# Aims of the guidance

## Increase your awareness of online safety in relation to extremism by:



Highlighting some of the concerns to look out for



Looking at new & emerging issues, including: social media, apps, games and messageboards



Identifying ways to keep your child safe online



Knowing where you can access information & support



# Online safety issues for children (NSPCC 2020-21)

**1 in 3** young people have seen something worrying or nasty online (used to be 1 in 4)



**1 in 3** children have been a victim of cyberbullying

**Almost 1 in 4** children have come across racist or hate messages online



In 2020-21 there were over **2,500** Childline counselling sessions about online bullying

Cyber bullying is any form of bullying which takes place online or through smartphones and tablets. This includes social networking sites, messaging apps, gaming sites and chat rooms such as Facebook, Xbox Live, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and other chat rooms.

## Ofcom 2021 – Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report



**Almost 100% of children use video-sharing platforms (VSPs) like YouTube.**

Most using VSPs more during Covid-19 than before.

**Just over 50% of 12-15s had some form of negative online experience.**

Mostly, being contacted by someone they didn't know who wanted to be their friend, which happened to almost 1/3 of children this age.



# Apps, games and social media

**Please find below information about different apps and social media commonly used by young people.**

**Here are some key safety facts to think about regarding all social media and some popular apps / games:**

-  Be aware that when users sign up to apps, it's possible to lie about your age without any checks being done.
-  Extremist influencers are almost certainly using mainstream social media like those shown below.
-  The attraction for influencers to use social media is that they can get a large following of young people as it's popular with them.
-  Extremist influencers use popular topics like news, sports, beauty and gaming to attract young people to their information, this often then links to their extremist content.
-  Children are choosing to get their information and news from social media / apps – safety and monitoring for these are key.



**ROBLOX**

**MINECRAFT**



**grand  
theft  
auto**



# Apps, games and social media



## WhatsApp

To use WhatsApp, you must be at least 16 years old. [www.whatsapp.com/legal](http://www.whatsapp.com/legal)

Messages and online status (if somebody is currently using the app) can be hidden.

Messages can be coded by users so that others can't see, however the police can do work to look at this.

WhatsApp has become more popular recently – with Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram it's one of the top social media apps used by children.



## Snapchat

The legal age to use Snapchat is 13. No one under 13 is allowed to create an account or use the services. [www.snap.com](http://www.snap.com)

When you download Snapchat, it asks for your date of birth.

Snapchat has short videos (10 seconds or less) that disappear. This can be an issue if you want to view them afterwards.

Snapchat has an update which has raised concern. It lets people see other users (can be strangers) on a map and then click on their name and view their profile and videos.



# Apps, games and social media



## Instagram

The legal age to have an Instagram account is 13 years old.

If a child is younger than 13 years old and has created an account, you can show them how to delete it.

Instagram has been linked as 'troubling' for young people as users often only upload edited and filtered photos that don't show the real image.

Instagram has a useful 'Tips for Parents' page.

**Search online for 'Instagram parental guide'.**



## YouTube

[www.youtube.com/support](http://www.youtube.com/support)

The legal minimum age to manage a YouTube account is 13.

YouTube says more than 200 million users watch video game-themed content on its platform every day.

YouTube remains a favourite for young people to watch rather than TV or TV apps.

There have been issues as young people have searched for and watched videos for things that they have seen in the news or that interest them without proper guidance or discussion with a trusted adult.

YouTube has a page that covers its policy on violent extremist content. During October – December 2018 there were 49,618 videos removed.

The figure is now often higher.

**Search online for 'YouTube policy violent extremism'.**





# Apps, games and social media



## Facebook

Facebook requires everybody to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account.

Creating an account with false info goes against their terms. This includes accounts registered on the behalf of someone under 13.

You can set up your page and posts to select whether your posts are private, to friends or the public.

There have been issues with Facebook. This has included live videos of attacks (Christchurch, New Zealand) and Facebook has been accused of not removing individuals/groups expressing somewhat extreme views.

## **ROBLOX** Roblox

Problems of grooming and online child abuse have been linked to Roblox as players are made up from users of all ages.

There has been awareness of a case study where a 10-year-old had been groomed online into joining an extremist hate chat group and then committing a violent extremist attack (child groomed by an adult pretending to be a young person).

Players aged 12 and younger have their posts and chats filtered for unsuitable content and to stop personal information from being posted.

To agree to Roblox's terms you need to be 18 or have parent's/guardian's permission to agree to them. However, you can be any age to have an account.

Account holders can stop who can chat with them and chat can be disabled.

Roblox have a useful 'frequently asked questions' page for parents.

**[www.corp.roblox.com/parents](http://www.corp.roblox.com/parents)**



# Apps, games and social media



## Fortnite

PEGI rating of 12 due to frequent scenes of mild violence.

It is not suitable for players under 12 years old.

Fortnite is a Zombie-style shooting game which has an in-game 'voice chat' feature.

There has been awareness of instances where younger siblings have overheard their older sibling playing the game and the younger sibling thinking that it was real life and that an attack was going to happen.

Gaming chat features (like those on Fortnite) have been linked to issues related to grooming and gangs (and radicalisation) in some cases.



## TikTok

TikTok is short 15 seconds of music/dance video sharing.

To sign up for TikTok, you first must pass an age gate. If a user is under 13, they'll be placed onto a TikTok for Younger Users experience.

TikTok is one of the newest and most popular apps, especially during Covid-19 with young people making home videos.

Recent concerns reported included a video circulating, apparently showing a very graphic image of a person taking their own life.

There are issues with TikTok like with other apps, with users trying to gain fame and becoming a target for online groomers.



# Gaming and PEGI\* ratings

\*PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) was established to help parents in Europe make informed decisions on buying computer games.



## Discord

A discussion app which has chats for different topics for anything from sports to extremism.

Concerns for the app listed as allowing for abusive language and extreme/extremist content to be

discussed. It is a free and easy to download 'mainstream' app. We have seen issues with the app in Sandwell relating to young people with extremist references made and external people joining lessons/chats.



# grand theft auto

## Grand Theft Auto

Grand Theft Auto (similar to Call of Duty) particularly and worryingly glorifies crime, violence against women, and shows very graphic violent street attacks. It has been said

that a person filling their head with violence (e.g. violent games) can sometimes 'normalise' violence which causes significant concern.



# Gaming and PEGI\* ratings



## Reddit

Reddit is a place where people write posts covering many different topics which others can comment on. The more popular a post is, the higher up it appears on the website. Users can post with an image, video or text and input links and polls.

Reddit has over 100,000 different sub-groups known as sub-reddits. There are issues where news can be changed/only looked at from one view point. Because of the sub-groups, it's based on personal opinions and a blog style. If someone wanted to create an echo chamber where only one side of the story is shared or an 'us and them' narrative, they could. We've seen issues in Sandwell where sub-reddits have led to young people reading extremist material and 'memes' shared with extremist references.



# MINECRAFT



## Minecraft

It's similar to Roblox. The picture shows a user-built Nazi camp on Minecraft. Most gaming chat platforms record chat, and it was for this reason that when a child some years ago threatened to carry out a mass shooting in a US school on a Minecraft chat, the services were alerted. Extremists/those wishing to spread propaganda and harm will use mainstream social media to get a large following, then move their content/discussion to less checked chat platforms/ encrypted message boards such as 8chan and 4chan, Telegram, BitChute, Gab etc.



# Messageboards & extremism

Mainstream apps (pages 6-10) can be an entry into extremism, however, it is on messageboards where extremists can share content more easily as it can be encrypted (coded so it cannot be easily seen).

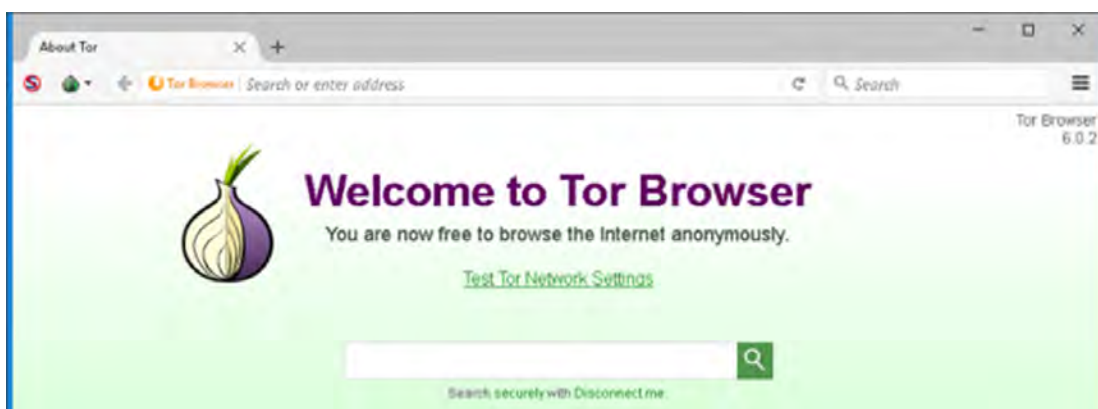
If a child/young person joined a messageboard, they could easily find extreme racist or extremist propaganda which can be very graphic.

There have been examples of signs and symbols of extremist groups and images showing weaponry and glorifying violence against certain ethnic groups because of their choice of relationship with someone from another background for instance.

If a person joins a messageboard, it does not mean they are extremist/radicalised, but the risk increases because of these reasons.



Telegram



# Ways to keep your child safe online

- Limit your child's time on the internet and stick to it - consistency is key!
- Take phone and all electronic devices away from children at night and when you are away for long periods.
- Children to seek permission from you before downloading any apps. Stick to the age limits and monitor.
- Regular monitoring – check search history, apps and talk history, every day or at least twice a week.
- Accounts are private, and location is turned off.
- Report any issues through the apps/ websites.
- Set clear and consistent boundaries - work with your child.
- Turn on parental control settings on all devices.

Call free NSPCC/02 helpline  
**0808 800 5002** - to set up parental controls, adjust privacy settings or get advice on social networks.



# New and developing issues

New apps may not have the same ways to report issues and safeguard as those that are more established.

Current online culture can lead to additional pressure on young people having to have the 'perfect image' or to be the best online (to be 'beautiful' on social media or high performing on games).

Issues have been raised with these attracting the attention of online influencers, looking for those who can influence others.

Social media is often used to reel in young people by giving an unrealistic and attractive impression of what other's lives are like.

There has been a rise in V-logs (video diaries) as children are being drawn to online 'role models' in their area of interest.

Videos or messages showing things that people find 'funny' or show issues/conflict tend to travel faster and get shared more often. This includes memes ('funny' images or very short videos that can be offensive and have been linked to racism and extremism).

These videos can lead to fake news, cyber bullying or even criminal consequences on those sharing them.

Memes, dark humour & language used on games get the interest of a younger audience.

# Fake news

**Fake news** is false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke. People spreading fake news know that it will spread quicker because it is usually controversial.



**The real story...** This news was presented as Muslim only houses being created. However, it was actually a Muslim Housing Association that was providing homes for any home buyers in the area.

This image shows fake news to share a hate message which is untrue in relation to what was happening in the image. This is of concern as it can create confusion and tension between different groups of people.





# Clickbait

**Clickbait** is something on a website that encourages people to click on a link. It sometimes comes up as a tab or highlighted text.



Clickbait is often used to lead people to click on a link which generates income for a website or gains popularity on pages for groups.

The image shows a social media post by Britain First who posted the image and asked people to share if they agreed.

Most people would usually agree that this image is a nice image of Britain, however, Britain First is a far-right group and sharing this image would gain popularity for the far-right group.

**THINK:** How does British wildlife relate to far-right agenda?

# Online radicalisation

**Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and develop extremist thinking associated with terrorist groups.

Here is an article of a young person, the youngest person convicted of terrorism in the UK, who had been active on racist online forums and charged with having information useful to a terrorist.

**A schoolboy has become the youngest person in the UK to be convicted of terror offences.**

At Westminster Magistrates' Court, the 14-year-old, who cannot be named, admitted three counts of possessing information useful to a terrorist.

The boy, from Darlington, was arrested in July last year when he was 13 as part of an investigation into extreme right-wing terrorism.

He was bailed and will be sentenced on 1 April at Newton Aycliffe Youth Court.

The teenager, who had been active on racist online forums, was charged last week with possessing information useful to a terrorist - namely manuals for making explosives - with the offences relating to a period on or before July 2021, when he was 13 or younger.

The investigation was carried out by Counter Terrorism Policing North East.

Until now the youngest British terror offender was a neo-Nazi from Cornwall who downloaded one of several terrorist manuals when he was 13 but he was two years older when he was arrested.



Radicalisers prey on people who are vulnerable, including children, to try to influence them to the way that they think/their ideology.

Because of the internet's popularity, radicalisers are increasingly moving to the online space.

The image below shows propaganda used by Daesh. Propaganda is information that is spread for the purpose of promoting some cause.



If a young person finds propaganda online, much of what they see will appeal to them. This is because it's likened to their views on some issues and makes children think they are supporting groups that are doing good or for the disadvantaged.

In short, even intelligent, compassionate and charitable young people can be vulnerable to extremist narratives. If a young person sees a post like this and they don't know how to think critically

about the information or if they don't think that they can talk to a trusted adult about the views in the post, they can be easily led into thinking that such groups are good.

This an example groups use to manipulate children/the vulnerable to thinking its associated to a worthy cause.



# Online radicalisation

**Online recruiters are relentless –** they use the same techniques as grooming...

It's **IMPORTANT** to check...

- Who your child is talking to and listening to
- What and who they are watching
- Where they are going – the sites they are visiting



## Possible signs of online radicalisation

- Increased secretiveness - especially around internet use
- Isolating themselves from family/friends/religion/interests
- Denial/muted when challenged
- De-sensitised from difficult situations/conflict/war
- Talking as if from scripted speech
- Increased levels of anger and/or violence
- Becoming disrespectful or targeting specific groups
- Asking inappropriate questions about extremism/terrorism
- Having extremist/terrorist materials or attending events!
- Extreme changes in: behaviour, their language or appearance



**NOTE – these can also be normal teenage behaviour!**  
**You know your children and will know when their behaviour is of concern.**



# How extremists influence online

**What's concerning is extremists often use images, videos and music that young people and children will know or like in their posts online and then link this to their information. This often presents changed information to present it as their own cause.**

Propaganda from Daesh: An example shown here is captioned, "Charity? Jihadis handing out cash to members of the public at a dole office". Daesh's cause is in no way charitable and has led to many lives lost, including more Muslims than non-Muslims.



Charity? The propaganda shots show jihadis handing out cash to members of the public at a dole office



**This shows how extremists use popular news to try and increase their engagement and followers on social media/online platforms.**

Here Britain First are using the Poppy Appeal to attract people to like their information. And asking people to share their information and linking it to British wildlife and a cute image of a squirrel. The Poppy Appeal and British Wildlife are not associated with far-right politics.



# How do I talk to my child about being safe online?

## Working as a TEAM to stay safe online

Sites like [www.NSPCC.org.uk](http://www.NSPCC.org.uk) have some excellent information for online safety and promote exploring the internet together with your child as a **T.E.A.M.**



**T**alk about staying safe online.

**E**xplore their online world together.

**A**gree rules about what is okay and what is not.

**M**anage your family's settings and controls.

## Talk

- Tell your child to speak up and that they should not keep secrets if something is worrying them.
- Reassure them that you're interested in all aspects of their life.
- Say that you'd like to talk about stuff they've seen online, sites and apps they visit, and that you'll share the things you've seen too.
- Recognise that there will be positives to them being online, like using the internet to research homework, for example.
- Learn how to keep safe online together. This will help if online safety comes up as an issue later.
- Talk often. This will help you keep up to date with what they are doing online and who they are talking to regularly.

- Plan the time to talk into your family's week – this way you will prioritise the time to talk and you can share any worries or questions.

### Ask your child if they know:

- Where reporting functions are
- How to block someone
- How to keep information private

### Show them how to do these things...

Use [www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk) to help  
Talk about online privacy, and being Share Aware



# Explore



- Ask your child what sites or apps they like?
- Write a list - look at the apps together.
- Be positive about what you see and open up about the concerns you have:  
"I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about the things I've seen here."
- Ask what they think is OK for children of different ages – they'll feel involved in the decision-making.

**Be aware** that your child might talk about friends who use apps or sites that you've decided aren't suitable.

**Be ready** to discuss your reasons but recognise that they may not agree with you.

**Listen** carefully for the reasons why.

**Go through** simple ways to protect their privacy. Avoid usernames like birth dates or locations that give away too much information.

**Go through** a final list of sites you both agree are ok and work out when you'll next discuss it.

# Agree



- Agree how online behaviour – including sharing personal information – should be the same as what you would do in person.
- Agree to be careful what you share – sometimes people aren't who they say they are.
- Discuss images and photos, what might be suitable to share and what isn't.
- Discuss how photographs can give people a sense of you, and that sharing the wrong kind of image can give the wrong impression.
- Tell your child that if they're in any doubt they should talk to you first. When talking to your child – staying calm and approachable is the key.

# Manage



- Set controls on all children's devices and yours if your children use them. Call **0800 800 5002** and they'll talk you through it.

**REPEAT ALL STEPS ON AT LEAST A MONTHLY BASIS**

**BE AS HONEST AND OPEN AS YOU CAN WITH YOUR CHILD**

This will **build trust**. If your child is worried or comes across worrying material online, they will be more likely to talk to you about this.

This is **important** because it will help you to see the risks and help you **reassure them** also.

If you are too strict they will not always turn to you when they are in need!



# And finally...

“

Don't give your kids a hard time.  
But it's important that they are aware,  
that you are aware!

”

μην τους αμαρτίζετε  
αλλά είναι σημαντικό να είναι  
αυτοί και εσείς ευαίσθητοι



**SANDWELL PREVENT**  
SAFEGUARDING AGAINST EXTREMISM



# Information and support

[www.NSPCC.org.uk](http://www.NSPCC.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk/kids](http://www.childline.org.uk/kids)

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

[www.parentinfo.org](http://www.parentinfo.org)

[www.educateagainsthate.com](http://www.educateagainsthate.com)

Let's Talk About It - [www.ltai.info](http://www.ltai.info)

[www.parentsafe.lgfl.net](http://www.parentsafe.lgfl.net)

[www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)

NSPCC/02 - 0808 800 5002

Vodafone Digital Parenting magazine -

[www.vodafone.co.uk/digital-parenting-order-form](http://www.vodafone.co.uk/digital-parenting-order-form)

Inform the Police of a non-emergency on **101** or in an emergency call **999**

Inform the School Designated Safeguarding Lead

If you need further information or if you have a query, email your local Sandwell Prevent inbox on [Prevent\\_Inbox@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Prevent_Inbox@sandwell.gov.uk)



## Prevent training - supporting information

For information, support or guidance on Prevent in Sandwell, you can email: [Prevent\\_Inbox@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Prevent_Inbox@sandwell.gov.uk)

### Prevent referrals

if you would like to submit a referral regarding an extremism concern go to:

[www.sandwell.gov.uk/prevent](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/prevent)

### Report concerns anonymously

Anti-terrorist phonenumber - **0800 789 321**

The Department for Education helpline: **0207 340 7264**

or email: [counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk)

### Additional resources you can visit online:

Educate Against Hate: [www.educateagainsthate.com](http://www.educateagainsthate.com)

Run, Hide, Tell: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/stay-safe-film](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stay-safe-film)

Action Counters Terrorism (ACT): <https://act.campaign.gov.uk>

The Counter Terrorism Policing ACT Awareness e-Learning is now available for the public to access & complete: <https://ct.highfieldelearning.com>

ACT Early: <https://actearly.uk>

