

# Peninsula Children's Online Safety Newsletter

**Welcome to this, our first newsletter about helping children and young people stay safe online. We will be bringing you all the latest news and research about risks and safeguards associated with the Internet and mobile technologies – smart phones and gaming consoles.**



Ofcom has identified that 93% of all 5-15 year olds used the internet in 2013. This breaks down by age as: four in five 5-7 year olds (82%), and nearly all 8-11 year olds (96%) and 12-15 year olds (99%).

The Internet and world wide web is central to children's lives today, from the early years through to adulthood and beyond. So much so that there are debates about including access to the internet as a fundamental human right, worldwide! Certainly, children who cannot access information or communicate online are socially excluded from vast educational resources, and the preferred method for social networking by tens of millions of young people.

We start from an understanding that the Internet is a valuable resource for education and play. It is not the technology that creates risk or produces harm. It is the behaviour of the child that utilises online resources to abuse others or places themselves in harm's way.

There is so much in the newspapers and on TV about child abuse associated with the internet that no-one can be blamed for wanting to stop children going online. Yet the real answer is to teach children from a young age about how to use the Internet safely, understand the risks, and stay away from the darker places. It's just the same as teaching children road safety before allowing them out on their own.

I hope you'll find the information here useful in your work and personal life, and, in particular, explore the links we provide to online resources that can help you keep children safe online.

**Tony Staunton**

**Chair of Peninsula LSCB Child Online Safety Steering Group**

[Tony.Staunton@Plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Tony.Staunton@Plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk)

## Safer Internet Day

On the second Tuesday of the second month of each year, we celebrate Safer Internet Day. Across the world, schools and communities hold special events to promote positive online behaviours and safety.

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 is Safer Internet Day, with the theme of “Let’s create a better internet together!”. We have hosted many SID events over the past few years, with whole school activities, Library events and public marquees offering hands-on advice to parents, exploring filter systems, password protection and recommended boundaries for safe use.

This year we were very active, with events across the peninsula. In Torbay, Our Virtually S@fe project featured on the BBC3 Documentary ‘[Porn – what’s the harm?](#)’. In Plymouth, our own [Professor Andy Phippen](#) hosted workshop for secondary school pupils on the impact and implications of Sexting, based upon his current research.

We would like every agency involved in SID this time, from Police and Probation Services, through Social Work and Youth Services, Housing providers and community association, to Education and Early Years settings.

Can you and your agency do something special on the 10<sup>th</sup> February to join with children and young people to create a better, safer internet? Please do tell us.

For more information, go to [Safer Internet Day 2015](#) for resources and information.



## Teenage Partner Violence

One of our current concerns is the apparent increase in domestic abuse between teenagers in their first or early partner relationships. Nearly 75% of girls and 50% of boys have reported some sort of emotional partner abuse, according to the NSPCC and the University of Bristol. 1 in 4 teenage women have admitted to having experienced physical violence from a boyfriend.

There is evidence that links the role modelling of personal behaviours to messages and images on the Internet, through games such as Grand Theft Auto 5, social networking sites such as Chat Roulette or AskFM, and violent pornography. In particular, images that promote coercion and sexual conquest are everywhere, discounted by most emotionally resilient young people as LOL, but confusing and misunderstood by particularly vulnerable teenagers. Put downs, emotional abuse and even violence can be seen as “natural” and even signals of affection or love.



Different research has identified the widespread emotional neglect of teenagers by adults. We tend to back-off from offering protection and support to young people who, going through the prolonged period of change through puberty, are particularly emotional vulnerable.

**The neglect of adolescents involves many aspects of their lives – for example, what happens within their families, in particular as they become young adults; their peer relationships; their health and wellbeing; and their education. Institutional neglect takes place where practitioners or agencies ill-consider or discount the emotional distress being suffered by a young person.**

The impact of continuous negative or violent images and conversations on the internet, accessed on laptops, gaming consoles, smart phones and e-readers, can erode self-confidence and resilience. The pressure to perform, to look a certain way, to conform to on-screen images, can be demoralising and disempowering.

Research shows that adolescence is a particularly important time for mental health and is when many disorders first become apparent. In addition, what we know about the neural changes which can result from chronic or “toxic” stress - caused by not just physical and sexual abuse but also verbal abuse and neglect - highlights the importance of recognising and addressing all forms of abuse at the earliest opportunity.

So we need to know about the online experiences of our young people, and how that affects their day-to-day relationships. We need to talk more with teenagers, particularly about relationships and social norms of behaviour: what is acceptable, and what should we grow up to expect of others.

The internet has no moral compass and displays the extreme and the outrageous as much as the mundane and tedious. How can our young people become discerning and make informed choice about relationships and intimacy, without guidance and help?

Sources of ideas, advice and help:

- [“It’s Complicated”](#), by Dana Boyd
- [UK Safer Internet Centre Research Library](#)
- [Teenage Relationship Abuse](#)
- [www.respectnotfear.co.uk](http://www.respectnotfear.co.uk)

## Digital Parenting Magazine

Have you downloaded/ ordered the latest issue? Published in April 2014, schools and professionals who work with children and young people can order hard copies of issue 3 for free from [The Parent Zone](#).

**Alternatively, you can access the guide [online](#)**

## Assessment Framework and Online Safety

We have produced a huge amount of work to promote assessment of online safety. Working alongside our colleagues at the [South West Grid for Learning](#), practitioners involved in assessing the risks and needs of children have been encouraged to include reports of the child's online behaviours as a core part of any assessment.

We have found children as young as 20 months old able to surf the internet on their parents Smartphone. As mobile technology becomes central to the child's life, so we must include assessment of their online use, behaviours and relationships if we are to understand their needs.

SWGfL now offers bespoke training to child protection social workers, using their published toolkit to thoroughly equip lead professionals in understanding the child's interface with the internet. Our group member, Tony Staunton, has adapted the Conceptual Framework to offer examples of what to look for in assessing the child online:

### Online Conceptual Framework



Your Local Safeguarding Children Boards are ensuring that assessment of the child online is included in all child protection training, and we are providing more and more specific multi-agency training for e-safety. Go to your LSCB website for further details.

For e-safety training, go to [SWGfL](#)



helpline@saferinternet.org.uk  
0844 381 4772

## Professionals Online Safety Helpline

### Do you have a cyber bullying or digital safety concern?

The Safer Internet Centre provides a Helpline for professionals working with children and young people in the UK with any online safety issues they may face themselves or with children in their care. They can support you with all aspects of digital and online issues such as those which occur on social networking sites, cyber-bullying, sexting, online gaming and child protection online. The Helpline aims to resolve issues professionals face about themselves, such as protecting professional identity and reputation, as well as young people in relation to online safety.

It is primarily a signposting, advice, and mediation service, any urgent risk to children should be dealt with via normal safeguarding procedures.

Open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm. The Helpline can be emailed at any time, and these will be responded to during our normal working hours.

**More information** [here](#).

**Telephone: 0844 381 4772**

**e-mail: [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)**

## Sexting – there's a lot of it about

Recent surveys have found:

- **12% of UK 11-16 year olds have received sexual messages and 4% have sent sexual messages via the internet**
- **60% had been asked for a sexual image or video of themselves**
- **40% had created an image or video of themselves**
- **25% had sent an image or video of themselves to someone else.**

All these indecent images are illegal acts, but with more than 30% of all our young people involved in this activity, we have to address the behaviour rather than criminalise every offender. Our group member, Vicky Booty, is encouraging children and parents to talk about the dangers of sexting. Students at Torquay Academy have produced a short video to explain the dangers of sexting – "[Staying Safe and Sexting](#)".

The [Child Exploitation and Online Protection](#) service (CEOP) has produced excellent video stories identifying the way sexualised imagery, often now considered as intimate "selfies",



can get out of hand and have serious impacts upon a child's life. The video "[Exposed](#)" is a must for all to see, and a useful tool for carers and all of us involved with safeguarding to watch alongside young people we work with, and discuss the issues.

Another member of our group, Professor Andy Phippen has undertaken detailed research, and identified links between sexting and sexism. His research, "[Sexting: An Exploration of Practices, Attitudes and Influences](#)" published by the NSPCC has led to new thinking about our approach to ensuring young people are safe online. Values and attitudes, as well as behaviours, have to be discussed and debated. As Andy concludes,

**“While some of the results of this research might be shocking to an adult population who have not experienced technology to the degree these young people have, adults need to be aware and responsive to these issues in a non-judgemental and supportive manner. Young people upset or harmed as a result of these issues do not need to be told they should not have done it; they need someone to turn to who will support them and work with them. Young people have made it clear they are willing to talk about their online lives and the challenges they face. However, unfortunately adults sometimes do not wish to listen.”**

## **UK Safer Internet Centre News – funded by the European Commission**

If you'd like to see what the UK Safer Internet Centre has been up to over the past 12 months then click here for their [infographic](#). You can sign up to a regular newsletter from the UK SIC - Just add your e-mail address to the bottom of the info graphic link.

## **Recent Research**

Internet 'trolling' is the anti-social act of causing of interpersonal conflict and **shock-value controversy** online. More and more children are expressing upset at having had a troll attack in their personal Social networking account or by text. Much publicised new research by Claire Hardaker, "**Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication: From user discussions to academic definitions**" offers an academic attempt to understand why there is so much aggression and abuse on-line, only to conclude it is probably part of human nature. The research offers no discussion of how to protect children and young people from hostile encroachment into their personal space. We are all aware, however, that the notion of privacy is being completely changed by our engagement with information and communications technologies. [More on this in our next issue.](#)



ROLE MODEL

## & Familial Role Modelling

How do children learn to behave? In younger years, mostly by copying the people close to them – their older brothers and sisters and parents and wider family. The way of smiling, walking, sitting and talking are all family gestures, and we catch ourselves often behaving or sounding just like our closest relatives.

It makes sense, then, that the way the family uses the Internet will have a profound influence in the way the young child learns to behave online. For the child protection services, the understanding that the way family members use the internet will act as a subtle role model for the young children in the household is an important consideration.

How available are pornographic images? What is the family attitude towards young children watching 18 certificate videos or computer games (we found 1 in 3 eight year olds boasting that they regularly played Grand theft Auto – an explicit 18+ rated game)? To what extent do parents and older siblings advertise the fact they make dates online to meet-up with people they don't know for the first time. How long are family members spending online in video chat rooms, and what does the child hear and see?

**The internet has brought about significant changes in family behaviour, and allows for new enhanced communication methods, new games shared between parents and their children, and access to a wealth of education and fun. Role modelling of safe behaviours, acceptable language and mutual respect in the online world is just as important as in all the other experiences through which a child learns and develops.**

## Your representative on the Steering Group

These are the people that sit on the Peninsula LSCB Children's Online Safety Steering Group and who they are representing:

Elizabeth Cox, **Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Safeguarding Children Board**

[Elizabeth.cox@cft.cornwall.nhs.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.cox@cft.cornwall.nhs.uk)

Julie Mitchell, **Devon Safeguarding Children Board**

[julie.mitchell@devon.gov.uk](mailto:julie.mitchell@devon.gov.uk)

Tony Staunton, **Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board**

[Tony.staunton@plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Tony.staunton@plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk)

Lucinda Wills, **Torbay Safeguarding Children Board**

[Lucinda.wills@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Lucinda.wills@torbay.gov.uk)

Brent Davison, **Devon and Cornwall Police**

[Brent.davison@devonandcornwall.pnn.co.uk](mailto:Brent.davison@devonandcornwall.pnn.co.uk)

Maria Hollett, **Plymouth Early Years Service**

[maria.hollett@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:maria.hollett@plymouth.gov.uk)

Phil Smale, **Further Education**

[psmale@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:psmale@cityplym.ac.uk)

David Bailey **Ecumenical Forum**

[Fr.david@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Fr.david@blueyonder.co.uk)

Nigel Cox, **Voluntary sector**

[Nigel.cox@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Nigel.cox@barnardos.org.uk)



## Social Media to keep up to date

There are many twitter accounts and bloggers you can follow to keep up to date with the changes. Each newsletter we will introduce some new ones and some regulars to help you keep in touch with developments in online safety.

### **UK Safer Internet Centre:**

Follow us on Twitter [@UK\\_SIC](#)

Professionals Helpline [@UK\\_SIChelpline](#)

Like us on: [www.facebook.com/saferinternetuk](http://www.facebook.com/saferinternetuk)

### **CEOP**

Follow us on Twitter: [@CEOPUK](#)

Website: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

### **Childnet International**

Follow us on Twitter: [@childnet](#)

Website: <http://www.childnet.com/>

### **Torbay's Virtually S@fe project**

Follow us on Twitter: [@BeVirtuallySafe](#)

Website: <http://www.torbayvirtuallysafe.co.uk/>

### **South West Grid for Learning**

Follow us on TwitterL [@SouthWestGrid](#)

Website: <http://www.swgfl.org.uk/>



Safeguarding  
Children Board



PLYMOUTH  
SAFEGUARDING  
CHILDREN BOARD



Devon  
Safeguarding Children  
Board