

Engaging Families in Online Safety

Technology can sometimes be seen as a "scary" or "frightening" issue to many adults and using the words such as "ICT" and "Technology" can sometimes put parents/carers off attending e-Safety events as they may be concerned about not having sufficient computer skills to help protect their child. Online safety or "e-Safety" is not about technology skills, it is about keeping children safe online and so parenting skills and communication and not computing/technology are the most important thing.

Sometimes families may think they are doing enough to protect their children by putting filters on search engines, installing antivirus software, having a laptop downstairs and banning children from using certain sites without considering how successful these tools are or if their children could access the internet elsewhere, so it is important to highlight that discussion and education about safe use is the key.

It is important that schools/settings focus on the importance of keeping children safe online and that online safety is not seen as a purely ICT issue. By working together, parents and carers, schools/settings and other professionals can help to reinforce online safety messages and can encourage positive behaviour wherever and whenever children go online.

Awareness-raising with families should focus on:

- The range of different ways children and young people use and access technology e.g. mobile phones, games consoles, tablets and apps etc. not just laptops and computers.
- The many positive uses of technology as otherwise online safety can easily become frightening and scaremongering so be aware that the vast majority of interactions and experiences on the internet are positive!
- The importance of developing risk awareness and risk management by children and young people (according to their age and ability) and resources parents/carers can use to help discuss online safety
- Practical tips for online safety in the home such as using filters, parental controls, creating appropriate user profiles and home computer security

How can schools/settings and professionals engage with families?

Often parents/carers can be a very hard-to-reach audience due to a number of reasons so it is important that schools/settings and professionals explore a number of options when raising the profile of online Safety within the community.

1. **Parental Awareness Sessions and Face to Face Training sessions.** See below.
2. **Online Safety links on school/setting websites and/or learning platforms.** School/setting websites can be great communication tools for busy parents/carers and can be used to highlight new resources and information for parents to use at home with their children. Schools/settings can access a number of free downloads which can be added to websites which provide users with a one-click route to advice, guidance and if required an ability to report online crimes or concerns.
3. **Regular communication with parents/carers.** Use regular communication channels e.g. newsletters, emails, texts or letters home to ensure online safety messages are clear and shared with all members of the community. This could include "top tips" or references to new and useful resources. This can also be a great way of engaging with parents before offering e-Safety specific events
4. **Using social media.** Many schools/settings are now using social media tools as an extended communication approach. When appropriately risk assessed and carefully managed, social media can offer school/settings useful ways of communicating and engaging with families in a

popular medium which is easily accessible. It is important that schools/settings use this in combination with other traditional communication channels.

5. **Events for or by children regarding online safety.** Turnout to online safety sessions or presentations have been noticeably improved by involving children, such as a play/event or by encouraging the children to present themselves to parents such as via a whole school/setting assembly. Some schools and settings find inviting parents to attend children's lessons or workshops to help improve parent/child learning can also increase attendance at events. These sessions could be led by the school/setting and supported by other professionals, but sessions which are led by the children can often have a greater impact (as well as improved attendance).
6. **Including online safety at open evenings or well attended events.** Many schools and settings have found that opening up the school/setting or other community venues to parents/carers for a day or an evening has increased the number of families engaging in e-Safety. Schools and settings have offered open ICT Suite sessions where parents can drop in (alone or with their children) to explore useful websites or explore resources used with children. Highlighting online safety at other events can also help to reinforce that this is about safeguarding and not ICT.
7. **Linking in with other school/setting or community events.** Attendance for specific online safety parental awareness sessions can often be low or may not always engage with the most vulnerable families. It can sometimes be more useful to highlight online safety when parents would already be coming into the school/setting. Some events which may work well are schools discos, plays (a large and captive audience!), transition events, fetes (summer, Christmas etc.) etc. One setting found that the online safety stand was very popular when it was placed next to the queue to see Father Christmas!
8. **Home School/Setting Agreements.** Many schools/settings ask parents to sign consent forms or Acceptable Use Policies before letting children use computer systems. Whilst these are an excellent idea, they can often be hard to manage and to ensure they are returned to the school. An alternative is to add a reference to the schools/settings online safety policy and procedures in the Home School Agreement - which all parents/carers MUST sign before a child can join the school. This can then be discussed as part of transition or new entry to the school to help share the school/settings ethos at an early stage.
9. **Questionnaires/online polls.** This can be a useful way of seeing when and where a school or community may need to focus its delivery or awareness raising. Questionnaire/polls designed by children themselves to highlight popular apps or worries can be very effective. A good idea is to send questionnaire or online polls to parents and then compare these with answers given by children to highlight any gaps or concerns.
10. **Sharing the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) or School Online Safety Policy** for use or adaptation in the home and inviting feedback and discussion from parents/carers. Use school/setting parents groups/associations to help raise awareness and they can be a great place to talk about ways to engage with parents.
11. **Involve parents/carers via forums and groups.** If your school/setting has an active parent or friends association then they can be great ways of ensuring that parents/carers contribute to the whole school/setting ethos. If your school/setting has an online safety group/team/committee then make sure parents/carers form part of that group.
12. **Think outside the box!** Screens (TV, computer) around school or the community can also be a good way of getting parents more engaged with online safety by using a rolling presentation at parents evenings, fetes, or other times when visitors are in the building such as school opening and closing times. One setting reported great success by pitching parents/carers versus children by playing an online safety game at the school fete! Some settings have made a computer with internet access available to parents/carers (with AUPS) so that those without internet access at home can still access important emails and messages. One setting used an online safety storybook as part of transition to engage parents/carers in the early years with online safety messages.

Running Online Safety Parental Awareness Sessions

Parental awareness sessions can be a really good way of engaging with parents about online safety in the home to promote a consistent and clear message. However attendance at such events can vary and therefore should not be used in isolation.

To ensure the best turn out schools/settings and professionals could try the following methods:

- Send out an invitation letter to all parents/carers and the local community - this can be via a printed letter, text/SMS services and/or email. This should be sent out a few times as reminders, ideally with different content to encourage parents to attend. Often a directly addressed letter can help engage parents, especially if it links in with pupils' education.
- Highlight the event in a variety of ways e.g. on the school/setting website, social media channels, local press, community communicational channels, and/or newsletters etc.
- Schools and settings could display posters in the reception area, in public areas (e.g. fences, display boards in the playground) and also in the wider community e.g. Children Centres, local Shops, churches, community centres, display boards etc.
- Work with the local community to promote the event and engage with families who may not have attended otherwise e.g. neighbourhood police, Community Wardens, Children's Centres, Heath centres and Libraries. Speak with other local schools, nurseries and playgroups etc to see if they have families who would like to attend.
- Some settings report that stating that sessions have limited numbers and will operate on a first come first served basis or admission by booked "tickets" only can help increase attendance
- Settings may be able to entice parents by including a raffle or a reward for attending. Some schools and settings have obtained prizes from local industry and raffled these at the events; other schools have offered discounts to school events or "freebies" etc.
- Providing refreshments can be a good idea (cake and tea/coffee is always a winning combination!) and some settings have found that offering a crèche or space for children to be supervised whilst parents attend has increased attendance.
- It is also a good idea to ask parents when they would prefer the session to be offered e.g. morning, afternoon or evening, to ensure as many parents as possible can attend. Coffee mornings/afternoons can allow parents to attend just after or before the school run and evening sessions may help to accommodate families who work during the day. Some settings have "recorded" or video streamed the session so it is available to parents who could not attend in person.
- The best attended events have been organised with engagement and encouragement with the leadership and management team and if possible with the support of any parents groups/associations or Family Liaison Officer/Parental Support Advisor etc.
- Avoiding using any technical terms to stress that this event is not about ICT and computers, but is about keeping children safe and that parenting and relationships are key to keeping children safe online
- Use local/national stories and statistics (NSPCC, Ofcom and EU Kids Online are good sources) to engage parents but be aware that some pieces of research could be interpreted in different ways! The best data to use is gathered by the school/settings community so survey your children, staff and parents to find out what really is happening online in your setting.
- Using outside speakers can be very helpful to reinforce the settings messages however settings should not become too reliant on this approach as it can mean the setting could lose ownership of the issues. When using outside speakers, schools and settings should ensure that they are promoting the right ethos (and are using up-to-date and appropriate materials) and must make sure that leadership staff attend the session as outside speakers may not know the setting, the children or the community.
- Don't be put off if the first event has a lower than expected attendance. If settings have got the right balance then word will spread about how useful the session was and the numbers should increase in the future.

Links and resources for Parental Awareness Sessions and Engagement

Reporting Concerns and seeking support

- CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk
- Internet Watch Foundation – Report illegal content www.iwf.org.uk
- Kent Police: <http://www.kent.police.uk/internetsafety>
- Parent Port – report inappropriate content www.parentport.org.uk
- Parents Protect - www.parentsprotect.co.uk/internet_safety.htm
- Lucy Faithfull: <http://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/> - Child Protection Charity
- Marie Collins Foundation: <http://www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk/>

Videos and Presentations

- CEOP's resources: "Where's Klaus", "Naked Selfies" and "Parents Guide to Technology"- films, sample presentations, handouts etc. are available at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents and can be downloaded from www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers
- The SWGfL video "Do you know?" and "Golden Rules" videos can be downloaded from <http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/e-Safety-Movies>
- "Not Knowing's not enough" for parents/carers is available online at <http://explore.ee.co.uk/digital-living>

Leaflets, Posters and Websites:

- Digital Parenting Magazine available from www.vodafone.com/content/index/parents.html
- The Parent Zone: www.theparentzone.co.uk
 - Parenting in the Digital Age: www.pitda.co.uk – including training for professionals to become "Parenting in the digital age" facilitators.
- NSPCC:
 - The NSPCC have factsheets, videos and resources to share with parents as part of their Share Aware Campaign: www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety
 - NSPCC Net Aware campaign has advice regarding social networking sites and apps: www.net-aware.org.uk – A blog post here highlights ways this resource can be used with families: <https://kentesafety.wordpress.com/2015/05/27/nspcc-net-aware-resource-ideas-for-use/>
- Childnet International:
 - Childnet have a range of fantastic resources include leaflets and online content for families here: www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers
 - Know It ALL for Parents from Childnet International includes lots of material (including a sample presentation) and can be found at www.childnet.com/resources/know-it-all-for-parents
- UK Safer Internet Centre www.saferinternet.org.uk have some great resources which can be shared with parents/carers. It includes quizzes, conversation starters, factsheets about types of devices and guidance on popular parental controls
- Get Safe Online - www.getsafeonline.org
- Family Online Safety Institute - www.fosi.org
- Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org – fantastic videos and resources to share with parents/carers from Sky, BT, Talk Talk and Virgin.
- Know the net: www.knowthenet.org.uk
- BBC Webwise: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise>
- Online Safety Story books can be a great way to engage with parents/carers. Examples and ideas can be found here: <https://kentesafety.wordpress.com/2015/06/05/online-safety-storybooks/>
- Kelsi – Guidance for education settings contains links and recommendations for resources to use/share with parents/carers
http://www.kelsi.org.uk/pupil_support_and_wellbeing/safety_health_and_wellbeing/child_protection_safeguarding/e-safety/e-safety_useful_links.aspx