



## PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER 16

### Internet safety

#### Knowing the risks

Most people would agree that modern media such as the internet, social media and smartphones have made our lives much easier in so many ways. They are, however, not without their dangers and it is the very features that make them so useful that also heighten the risks involved, in particular:

- › The speed with which the technology works – if you click on a button, it responds within seconds, giving you no time to think about whether you want to change your mind or rephrase something you said, and
- › The paradoxical way in which modern media provide both a very public forum and also an unreal, virtual world in which you can conceal your own identity and adopt a very different one. This has obvious attractions for anyone engaging in illegal activity and can also encourage otherwise law-abiding people to behave on the internet in ways they would never normally dream of doing.

The potential risks include:

- › Allowing a virus to infect your computer and prevent it from working properly, search for your passwords or use your email to bombard other people with unwanted messages
- › Losing substantial sums of money
- › Posting a photo or message that later on you find quite embarrassing, and which, if it went viral, could expose you very publicly
- › Unintentionally embarrassing, upsetting or insulting someone else or receiving messages that make you feel the same way
- › Sustained abuse or cyberbullying

#### The impact of speech and language impairments

Young people with speech and language difficulties are likely to be particularly vulnerable to the risks involved in using computers and smartphones, as they may find it harder to:

- › Recognise a potentially risky situation
- › Remember what to do if they encounter one

Their impaired communication and social skills may also put them at higher risk of being bullied and harassed.

It is therefore important that they are taught how to use new media safely and given plenty of reminders. As the factsheet on *Personal Safety* explains, your son or daughter may well get some input at school or elsewhere, but not necessarily as much as he or she needs. It is important to find out what he or she will be taught routinely and, if necessary, ask whether it is possible to access an enhanced level of support.

If so, you might need to get this included on their Transition Plan or Statement, stating clearly who will do what, when. If your son or daughter does not currently have a statement, but is clearly very vulnerable, you should consider requesting statutory assessment. For more information about statements and Transition Planning, see the factsheet *The Transition Process*, or ring the **Afasic Helpline on 0300 666 9410**.

You should also be prepared to practise and reinforce at home the lessons your son or daughter will be learning at school or elsewhere. This might seem rather daunting if, like many parents, you feel out of your depth dealing with modern media, If you have other children of a similar age, they may be able to help out. Otherwise, start with the basic advice on this sheet, and then move on to the other sources of information listed below.

#### Important things to remember

- › Never give your personal details to anyone you meet on the internet
- › Nothing is really private on the internet
- › Do not believe everything you see and read on the internet
- › People you talk to on the internet are not necessarily who they say they are
- › Protect your computer with anti-virus software
- › If you are unsure about anything, talk to someone you trust

#### General guidance

- › Never let anyone have access to your passwords
- › Google yourself every now and then. That way you can see what information there is about you online, and if you do not like it, you can take steps to change it
- › Do not post any personal information online. This includes your address, phone number, date of birth, and passwords.
- › Do not tell anyone your bank details.
- › Remember to log out of a service properly after use, especially on a shared computer.

#### Specific guidance

##### Social Media

- › Do not add people you do not know to your friends list on Facebook or other similar sites
- › Check the privacy settings on accounts like Facebook to make sure you are keeping posts and photos private
- › Think very carefully before posting photos. Once a picture is online, anyone can download, share or even change it.

### Chatrooms and message boards

- > Be careful about using your own name. A nickname or made-up name is often safer, or use your first name on its own.
- > Be very cautious if you arrange to meet someone you only know from online conversations. Make sure you choose a public place, such as a café or pub, and ask a friend or relative to go with you.

### Emails

- > Be careful about opening attachments or clicking on links in emails from someone you do not know. If you are not sure, ask someone you trust.
- > Do not respond to emails that appear to be asking you for money or trying to sell you something. Remember that reputable organisations will not send emails asking you to reply with details of your bank account/credit card.

### Online Shopping

- > Only buy things online from organisations with an address starting with 'https' (the 's' means it is secure).

### Uploading/Downloading Music, Videos and Other Files

- > Do not upload videos onto sites like YouTube unless you are happy for everyone to see them
- > Be careful what videos and music you download. Make sure you only use websites that are safe.

### Smartphones and iPads

- > Be careful about signing up for free apps. In some cases, apparently, they have been used to allow other people to access your location, user identity and camera without your permission.

### Cyberbullying or Harassment

- > Never respond or retaliate
- > Save and print out any bullying messages, posts, pictures or videos
- > Keep a diary of everything that happens
- > Do not pass on cyberbullying videos or messages about other people
- > Report any incidents of cyberbullying – do not ignore it
- > Block any users that send you nasty messages
- > If you are being bullied repeatedly, think about changing your user name, nickname or profile
- > If someone wants to keep their chats with you secret, or tell you something they call a 'secret', inform an adult immediately
- > If you are worried or upset at any time seek help from someone you trust

### Sources of further information and advice

- > The **BBC** has a number of free online courses in its webwise section, including one on keeping safe online:  
<http://tinyurl.com/b7dl6na>
- > The **UK Safer Internet Centre** has lots of advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe on the internet. Its website contains a section specifically for children and young people and another for parents and carers:  
[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk).
- > **Thinkuknow**, a website run by CEOP (The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre), contains lots of information about internet and mobile safety. There are specific sections for children and young people of different ages and a separate section for parents and carers:  
[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
- > **Wise Kids** is a non-profit organisation, based in Wales, which aims to promote internet and mobile literacy and safety. Its website contains lots of accessible information and advice for different audiences including young people and parents:  
[www.wisekids.org.uk](http://www.wisekids.org.uk).
- > The charities **Mencap**, **Cerebra** and **Ambitious about Autism** have worked together to produce a parents' guide to internet safety, which can be downloaded here:  
<http://www.mencap.org.uk/parent-guide-in-internet-safety>

### Afasic Publications and Services

*Young Person's Identity Card* : £0.50

*Watch Your Language* – professionals' pack: £17.00

*The Parent's Voice: Advocating for your Child* – This booklet aims to encourage and empower parents to become involved in influencing and improving services for children and young people: £5.00

**Afasic Helpline** - Open 10.30 - 2.30, Monday - Friday,  
tel: **0300 666 9410** or **0207 490 9420/1**

Afasic - voice for life

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