

# Digital minister urges parents to follow new guidance to keep children safe online during lockdown

With more people than ever working from home and many children using the internet for education and entertainment, there are increased risks of exposure to online harms such as cyberbullying and disinformation.

To combat this, today's guidance sets out a four-point plan and recommends reviewing security and safety settings, checking facts and guarding against disinformation, being vigilant against fraud and scams, and managing the amount of time spent online.

It follows a virtual roundtable held yesterday (Wednesday 22 April) by the Minister for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dinenage, the Security Minister, James Brokenshire, and child safety organisations to assess the impact of coronavirus on child online safety and bolster ways of working together to protect children online.

Minister for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage said:

Staying at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives means we are spending more time online. This means we must all be extra vigilant, follow good security practice and make sure our children are safe too. It's also important that we check the facts behind what we read and remember to take regular breaks.

We are completely committed to making the UK the safest place to be online, and that's why we have brought together a wealth of practical advice which I urge parents to use and share with their children.

Security Minister James Brokenshire said:

The safety of children online is of the utmost importance. That's why our law enforcement continue to pursue predators and bring them to justice.

We also want to empower adults to use all the guidance and advice available to help them keep children safe from all forms of online harms, including child sexual abuse.

As well as offering advice on security settings, fact-checking and protecting against fraud, the new guidance encourages people to consider the impact screen use is having on their wellbeing.

With more parents looking after and educating children from home, the guidance has tailored advice for parents to keep their children safe online.

This includes using parental controls to manage what children can access, switching on family filters to protect children from inappropriate content, and having conversations with children to encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if they come across anything online that makes them uncomfortable.

UK Safer Internet Centre Director and Childnet CEO, Will Gardner, said:

Technology has proved to be enormously important in these unprecedented times. We know that children are benefitting hugely from being connected, but we also know it's even more important that we take steps to keep them safe and happy whilst online.

That's why we welcome guidance which brings together practical and simple advice for families in this difficult period.

The government continues to develop legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online, and will introduce this once Parliamentary time allows.

In February the government announced it was minded to appoint communications watchdog Ofcom as the regulator to enforce a statutory duty of care to protect users from harmful content.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors:**

- The guidance can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-staying-safe-online](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-staying-safe-online)
- The guidance points to a number of existing resources from organisations such as Full Fact for checking claims about COVID-19, safety advice from the National Crime Agency, Internet Matters, the UK Safer Internet Centre and Childline, as well as tools for managing family screen time, such as Apple's Screen Time feature and Google's Family Link.
- The following organisations attended a virtual roundtable co-hosted by the Minister for Digital and Culture and the Security Minister to discuss online safety during Covid-19: Barnardo's, Internet Watch Foundation, NSPCC, ParentZone, Samaritans, UK Safer Internet Centre