West Mercia POLICE
SERVING - PROTECTING - MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

Your easy guide to child e-safety

A practical guide for parents and carers in West Mercia

Step 1 Understand why e-safety is so important

Dear Parent or Carer,

Thank you for taking the time to download this important guide.

Everyday, the internet offers us new and exciting ways to engage and interact. And for children especially, using the internet has become the way to communicate with friends. Whether on a computer at school, a laptop at home, a mobile phone or even a games console, children in West Mercia are now spending an average of 3 hours a day online. But with these new and exciting opportunities to communicate come dangers. Whilst you would not dream of exposing your child to violence, bullying and strangers these are all real threats to your child when they spend time online. We have had a number of serious incidents in West Mercia over the last 18 months.

As parents, it is our responsibility to recognise the dangers and to ensure we know what our children are doing. And that they know how to protect themselves. Working with our local partners, West Mercia Police is raising awareness of the basic rules you as a parent should be considering along with the basic facts that children using the internet should be aware of.

Martin Lakeman – Detective Superintendent – West Mercia Police.

Step 2 Always Follow the 5Ps

positive

Stay positive about social networking sites. Strike a balance between educating children to behave safely and trusting them to get on with it.

privacy

Make sure children know how to use privacy settings. Explain the importance of keeping information private and not sharing everything with everyone.

photos

Check that any photos posted are suitable. Photos can easily be copied, changed or circulated. And bear in mind that photos can potentially stay online forever.

postings

Establish ground rules about what is and isn't acceptable to say – about themselves and others.

parents

Encourage children to tell you about inappropriate contact that makes them feel uncomfortable. Offensive images or messages can be reported to the police via Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre website:

www.ceop.gov.uk/reportabuse

Step 3 Make sure your children know how to stay SMART online

Safe — **Stay safe** by being careful not to give out personal information to people you are chatting to online.

Meeting — **Meeting someone** who you have only been in touch with online can be very dangerous.

Accepting — **Accepting** emails, instant messages or opening files and pictures from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may well contain viruses or nasty messages.

Reliable — Information you find on the internet **may not be true,** or someone online may be lying about who they are!

Tell — **Tell your parent,** carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

Step 4 Understand the language

With the likes of instant messaging, texting and chat rooms, a whole new language has evolved. Get to know some of the most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms.

To find out more about child e safety and other general safety information to help you stay safe in your home please visit

Find out more www.westmercia.police.uk