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Who are RUSAFE and what do we do?

- We are commissioned by Bucks County Council
- Additional funding from Thames Valley Police
- We provide a service to children **aged 10-18** years old who need support around going missing, personal safety and healthy friendships and relationships.
- We are an independent, non-statutory service.

- All our staff are trained in child safeguarding and have expertise to address concerns around coercion and exploitation – specifically sexual and criminal exploitation.

In a nutshell there are 2 mainstreams of support we offer as a service:

- Missing
- Client 1-1 Work
- Prevention

Being Aware: Online Risks

- Grooming: Sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation
- Pornography, and the impact it has on sexual behaviour and perception of gender roles
- Sexting and nude images distribution
- Access to explicit or violent content that could scare or upset them
- Live streaming and video app misuse/stranger danger
- Cyber bullying
- Identity theft
- Sharing personal information and feelings could lead to abuse/exploitation
- Online Scams
- Screen time health hazards
- Increased social anxiety from lack of real life interactions

Why not completely restrict access to technology?

- Increased connectivity with trusted friends
- Access to an incredible number of enlightening videos and articles
- Increased global awareness and involvement in world issues
- School homework/Research
- Allows you to express your identity; opinion and creativity
(However, always remind your child to check what they are posting online does not cause offense to anyone.)

Ultimately we cannot control every aspect of our child's life; if they want to use technology they will most likely find a way!!

Importance of parental involvement

Whilst children now receive education in school on online safety, young people are likely to want to explore new apps and websites whilst stuck at home, whether that's for learning or fun

It is therefore important that parents are just as aware as teachers and other professionals, so they can support their children in making informed decisions and can notice any warning signs of worrying behaviour or activity

A lot of online abuse happens without being reported, or goes on for months/years without being reported as many children find it difficult to tell their parents/carers. If you become aware your child has disclosed anything to a professional rather than yourself please do not take it to heart, we know many young people often feel it easier to speak to someone who they are not emotionally involved with.

Barriers children face disclosing

A child's silence comes from:

- Fear of being labelled
- Threat of secure accommodation
- They do not recognise exploitation or abuse
- Fear of court procedure
- Impact on family
- Misplaced love, gifts, money and attention from boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of violence
- Fear of separation from family/change of care placement
- Shame- This is a very powerful silencer!

Tips for Parents/Carers

1. Talk about online safety

Young people can get stressed and anxious when adults make a 'big deal' of something

Talking about online safety should be casual, pressure free and often. It's about picking the right moment!

This might feel a little awkward at first, try not to push it too much if your child becomes agitated and keep coming back to it.

This encourages dialogue that feels more natural as time goes on

2. Explore Together

- Ask your child to show you their favourite websites and App's and what they do with them
- Listen, show interest, praise positive content and encourage them to teach/show you the basics of the website or App

This should be a relaxed activity not a forced one, as this could lead to a feeling of distrust

Knowing you understand the technology will help them to disclose anything worrying

Having regular non-judgmental conversations will help them to consider their behaviour online

3. Show them you care and will always support them

- Ask them if they have or their friends have ever seen anything online that worried them
- Make sure they know that if they ever feel worried or have a friend who is worried, they can get help by talking to you or another adult they trust
- For many children, disclosing to a friend's parent along with the support of their friend is an easier option
- Reassure them you would listen to them and act calmly and carefully

4. Encourage them to be responsible online

If your child is engaging with friends online, remind them to consider how someone else might feel before they post or share something

If they are considering sharing a photo/video of somebody else, they should always ask permission first

If you see anything they have posted that is alarming, ask them to discuss with you the reasons for this and ask them to consider what the consequences might be

Remind your child not to share personal information online for their safety and make sure their safety settings are in place when using App's

5. Learn about parental controls

Parental controls are generally effective and show your children you are serious about internet safety

Parental controls are available on your home broadband and any internet enabled device in your home (Excluding mobile data)

They enable you to do things such as:

- Check location settings and what personal information your child is sharing
- Filter the content each family member is allowed to view, restricting access to inappropriate content for children
- Disable live chat functions for online games and platforms

- Block adverts and pop up's
- Set a time limit on your child's use of the internet
- Restrict search engine results to child friendly results only

6. Model good behaviour

It is important we also follow online safety procedures to show children we take it seriously

Online abuse can happen at any age and it is important young people don't adapt the "it will never happen to me" attitude

Showing that you are seriously concerned about the safety of your whole family doesn't make the child feel alone in the sense that they would be the only family member targeted

It is especially important parents consider what they post about their children on their own online accounts. In some cases children are targeted because of personal information found on a parent's social media

Whilst we might want to show off our children, they have a right to privacy also. Showing them that you are a responsible 'digital citizen' by asking their permission to post images and videos of them, will encourage them to mirror that behaviour with others

Signs to look out for...

The below signs do not necessary mean a child is being exploited, they may just indicate that a child is in need of some support.

- Unexplained gifts - could be clothing/trainers
- Change in language
- Become anti-police/anti-authority
- New friends, boy/girlfriend
- Missing school
- Disengagement with activities/school etc.
- Staying out/ not coming home
- Secretive
- Substance and/or alcohol use
- Always online or on the phone
- Moody
- Withdrawn
- Physical injuries
- More than 1 mobile

Online support for parents

CEOP: www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org.uk

Childnet: www.childnet.co.uk

Parent Info: www.parentinfo.org.uk

NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk

Who you can speak to

If you have concerns, even if you are unsure, you can contact...



Thames Valley Police:

Non-Emergency: 101

Emergency: 999



First Response (Children's social care)

Buckinghamshire county council

Tel: 01296 383962



Barnardo's RUSAFE

Tel: 01494 785552

Mobile: 07784 225 605