

Prevent Team Fact Sheet

Staying Safe Online



The Internet has revolutionised the way we communicate. Unfortunately, the internet, social media, and online gaming are all platforms that have been used by people to spread extremist messages and groom those they perceive as vulnerable.

Extremists use the internet because it is an easy way to spread their message to a mass audience. They can also post ideas and messages anonymously or under an assumed name. This makes it particularly hard to control or stop.

Extremists who operate online are particularly adept at targeting those they perceive as vulnerable. They will often pose as someone offering friendship, comfort, or understanding in order to gain influence over others. They will target those who feel they are missing a sense of purpose in their lives or who crave adventure, excitement or fulfilment.

Examples of questions professionals can ask

It is not easy to ask others about their browsing habits. However, getting a feel for how people are spending their online time, who they are associating with, what they are watching, and what they are saying, is an important part of safeguarding against possible harm. The world wide web means that people can be exposed to harm and exploitation whilst in their bedrooms, kitchens and sitting rooms and without the knowledge of even their closest friends or family members. This is what makes it such a significant threat.

Posing the following questions can help you to get a feel for the web habits of an individual:

- How often would you say you spend online on an average day?
- Has anyone ever asked you to say or do anything online which has made you feel uncomfortable?
- Have you ever watched anything or posted anything online which you have then regretted?
- Do you also have face to face or telephone contact with the people you talk to online?

What everyone can do to stay safe

- **Know who you are talking to** and be aware that meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be risky.
- **Never give out personal information.** This includes your telephone number and email address
- Be wary about what you are told online. Always try and **check information** by looking at other, well-respected websites or news providers, books, or asking your friends and family for their opinion. It is reasonable to want to 'fact check' something you are told and be wary of those who say you shouldn't do this
- **Think before you post.** Content posted online lasts forever and cannot be recalled. Always consider whether the content you are posting could be used against you by those who wish to harm you. If in doubt, do not post it.
- Understand how you can report suspicious or harmful content online. The **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency** and the Home Office both have websites where you can report content anonymously. They are listed below
- Be suspicious of anyone who pressures you in to doing anything you are uncomfortable with.
- Only open messages, emails, files and images from sources you trust.
- **Speak to someone you trust** if anything you have seen online has made you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It is always worth seeking a second opinion on something
- Use **safety tools** on social networks such as Facebook

Useful Websites and Further Reading

If you are concerned about the way someone has been communicating with you online:

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

To report online material promoting terrorism or extremism: [Report online material promoting terrorism or extremism - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

UK Safer Internet Centre: Online safety tips, advice, and resources to help children and young people stay safe online: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

UK Council for Internet Safety: Part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Education, and Home Office: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-council-for-internet-safety>

Online Safety Advice from the NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>