resource sheet

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION CLEARINGHOUSE

Online safety

Shaun Lohoar

The purpose of this Resource Sheet is to provide information on resources available for parents regarding online safety for their children. For another NCPC Resource Sheet relating to online practices see: *Images of Children and Young People Online* (Horsfall, 2010).

What is online safety?

Online safety is used interchangeably with terms such as Internet safety, cyber-safety, Internet security, online security and cyber-security. The risk of using computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices to access the Internet or other social media (SMS and MMS) is that breaches of privacy may lead to fraud, identity theft and unauthorised access to personal information.

For a child, going online may not only place their immediate emotional health at risk, but also potentially lead to physical harm. This is particularly so where little or no attention has been paid to the security of the device being used. In these types of cases, and for the purpose of this paper, online safety is a child protection issue.

Why is online safety important?

The Internet provides access to vast amounts of information and the opportunity for children to meet and communicate with people from around the world. However, it also has its share of dangers and risks for children, such as cyber bullying, stalking, or exposure to illicit materials. Criminal offenders have proved to be highly skilled at exploiting new modes of communication to gain access to children, and adult-only materials can be easily accessed by children if there are no protective mechanisms

in place (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2011; Queensland Police, 2009).

While online safety is important for protecting children from dangerous and inappropriate websites and materials, this does not mean that parents should discourage their children from accessing the Internet. The challenge is to help children enjoy the benefits of going online while avoiding the risks (Raising Children Network, 2010).

Government regulatory practices in Australia

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) works with consumers and other stakeholders in the communications industry to achieve active self-regulation and co-regulation. Together, they act to ensure compliance with licence conditions, codes and standards, and the collection of both federal and state laws that apply to Internet content in Australia (ACMA, 2011).

The principle of "co-regulation" that underpins the scheme reflects parliament's intention that government, industry and the community all play a role in managing Internet safety issues in Australia. ACMA also monitors the effect of regulations to ensure they are responsive to the community's needs (ACMA, 2011).

Practical tips for parents to help children use the Internet

The Raising Children Network website[1] provides some good advice for parents in helping their children to use the Internet safely. They suggest that by monitoring children's Internet use, protecting them from online threats, teaching them how to use the Internet effectively and by learning about the Internet themselves, parents can help their children enjoy and learn from the Internet safely and securely (Raising Children Network, 2010). More specifically, the following advice is recommended.

Monitor

- Talk calmly and frankly with your child and other family members about Internet activities.

- Keep the computer in a shared family area where you can monitor how long your child is online as well as the websites your child is visiting.

- Together with your child, set up some simple and fair rules about Internet use. This may include setting reasonable limits on the amount of screen time that your child is allowed.

- For older children, a written Internet use agreement with them will help to make rules clear.

- Use the History button in the browser program. It will allow tracking of the websites that your child visits.

- Find out if your child's school has an Internet policy and how Internet safety is maintained there.

- Remember that mobile phones and other digital devices can be used to access the Internet, and that use of these devices may also need to be monitored.

- If there is a wireless connection in the house, turn it off when it is not in use.

Protect

- Explain to your child that not all information on the Internet is good, true or helpful, and that some areas are for grown-ups only and are not intended for children to see.

1   See <www.raisingchildren.net.au>.

- Help your child identify unsuitable material by naming some things to look out for, such as sites that contain scary or rude pictures, swearing or angry words.

- Use a family-friendly Internet service provider (ISP) that provides proven online safety protocols, or ask an ISP how to source and install the right kinds of Internet security products for you and your family.

- Empower your child to use the Internet safely by showing your child safe sites and explaining why they are safe. It's also important to educate your child on why it's not safe to give out any personal details online.

Teach

- Focus on the positive aspects of the Internet when you are guiding your child. Spend time looking together at sites that are fun, interesting or educational.

- Encourage your child to question things on the Internet. When looking at a new site, your child could ask things like "Who is in charge of this site?", "Have I found information, or is it just opinion?" or "Is this site trying to influence me or sell me something?".

- Search for and use educational programs or websites specifically designed for your child's age group.

Learn

If you're not familiar with the Internet, start by learning about it yourself. All you need is a basic understanding to help you supervise and guide your child. You can check out community resources such as your local library, neighbourhood house, TAFE or Council of Adult Education programs. Many of these will provide classes or further information.

Report

If you have found any material online that you believe is prohibited or inappropriate you should contact the ACMA. For further information go to ACMA's website <www.acma.gov.au>, where a range of resources are available for parents and caregivers.

Accessing further information

Online safety information is easily accessible through any search engine, and numerous sites are devoted specifically to this issue. The following section identifies several websites on online safety that can be useful for parents and other caregivers.

Australian sites

Cybersafety help button download page <www.dbcde.gov.au/helpbutton>

The Help Button provides internet users, particularly young people, with a 'one stop shop' for cybersafety information and assistance. Once downloaded, the Button sits on the desktop or in the tool bar. When double clicked, the Button allows users to talk, report or learn about cybersafety issues such as cyberbullying, scams and fraud, and unwanted contact. There are links to KidsHelpLine, Scam Watch, AFP, and ACMA where you can report prohibited or inappropriate online material. Educational resources include links to the Cybersmart and Stay Smart Online websites.

Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM)— Promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media

An excellent source of up-to-date information about media and children, for parents and caregivers, professionals, students and researchers. The information is drawn from worldwide research studies, current literature, surveys, statistics and other verifiable authenticated sources of information. Contact numbers and helplines are provided to report breaches of Internet security or to procure advice about appropriate action to take.

Australian Government Resources Hub <australia.gov.au/topics/it-and-communications/internet>

A central resource from the Australian Government which includes a range of links to sites and organisations that are devoted to Internet safety.

Budd:e <www.staysmartonline.gov.au/schools_and_teachers>

An award winning cybersecurity education package with fun and challenging interactive games that help Australian schools students stay safe and secure online. The package comprises self-learning modules for primary and secondary students, as well as resources for teachers and parents.

CyberSmart—Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

Cybersmart provides activities, resources and practical advice to help young kids, kids, teens and parents safely enjoy the online world. The links contain audio-visual materials, tips and links to a wide range of resources.

CyberSmart Detectives—Online game to teach children Internet safety messages <cybersmart.engagelive.net/default.aspx>

Children are able to interact in real time with ACMA approved Internet safety experts working in "virtual control rooms" located throughout Australia. Guides are available throughout the sessions to answer questions and give advice, while additional resource materials and follow-up activities are provided to reinforce the Internet safety message.

CyberNetrix (Ages 13–16)—Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) <www.cybersmart.gov.au/cybernetrix/index.html>

CyberNetrix is another of ACMA's interactive online safety tools aimed at protecting secondary school students. While the students themselves can interact with the program, the teacher guide includes an additional 11 downloadable activities for students.

CyberQuoll (Ages 8–12)—Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) <www.cybersmart.gov.au/cyberquoll/index.html>

CyberQuoll is an Internet safety resource to assist in protecting upper primary school students. The site is about the Internet and bullying, scams and hoaxes, netiquette and dodgy content on

Internet sites and is recommended for use by students, teachers and parents.

CyberSmart: Wise up to IT—Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) <www.cybersmart.gov.au/wiseuptoit/>

Four young people tell their stories about cyberbullying, online stalking, Internet security and online grooming. Their stories explain what happened and how they dealt with the situation. The accompanying video clips prompt users to think about who they are really chatting to online, what personal information they are posting and whether or not their computer is protected from scams and spyware.

High Tech Crime Operations Unit—Australian Federal Police <www.afp.gov.au/policing/child-protection-operations.aspx>

Child protection operations of the AFP, through its High Tech Crime Operations Unit is responsible for the investigation of crimes associated with online child sex exploitation and child sex tourism. The links on this webpage allow access to a wide range of helpful materials and resources.

Images of Children and Young People Online—NCPC Resource Sheet <www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs18/rs18.html>

This Resource Sheet contains information about legal issues, privacy laws, emerging issues, classifications of online images, good practices, lodging a complaint about a website and links to additional resources.

Internet Industry Association (IIA)—Guide for Internet users <www.iia.net.au/index.php/initiatives/guide-for-users.html>

This guide assists Australian Internet users to understand Australia's co-regulatory framework for online content, pursuant to the requirements of legislation. The IIA is a non-profit, private sector industry body which, among other things, develops best practice rules for the industry in Australia in conjunction with ACMA.

Learning On Line—Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development <www.education.vic.gov.au/management/lol/default.htm>

The Learning On Line website provides advice for schools on cybersafety and the responsible use of digital technologies. It has been developed to help schools make the most of the opportunities presented by new developments in digital technologies. At the same time it aims to support schools to minimise risks that may arise through the use of these technologies.

Raising Children Network—Safety tips for parents of toddlers to teens <raisingchildren.net.au/articles/internet_safety.html>

The Raising Children Network website displays tabs for each phase of a child's development, from newborns to early teenagers. Internet safety tips and a comprehensive range of resources are provided to cater for each specific age group, with the exception of newborns and toddlers.

Stay Smart Online <www.staysmartonline.gov.au>

A one stop shop providing information for Australian internet users on the simple steps they can take to protect their personal and financial information online. The site has informative videos, quizzes and a free Alert Service that provides information on the latest threats and vulnerabilities.

SuperClubsPLUS—An online community for primary-aged children <www.superclubsplus.com.au/i/home>

SuperClubsPLUS is a safe social learning network where children experience first-hand how to keep themselves safe online. In particular, they learn the safe online strategies and behaviours required to better protect themselves on the wider Internet. Parents and teachers will also find the site useful for its range of training materials and resources.

NB. There is a fee attached to accessing some information

Teen health and Internet safety—Children, Youth and Women's Health Service <www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=243&id=2374&np=295>

This webpage provides guidance about the dangers of communicating online and how best to maximise safety when using the Internet. Links to some resources are available as well as a limited number of references for further research.

ThinkUKnow—Internet Safety Program <www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/>

ThinkUKnow is an Internet safety program delivering interactive training to parents, carers and teachers. Created by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, ThinkUKnow Australia has been developed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Microsoft Australia. Users will need to subscribe to the site to gain access to its tools and resources.

International sites

CyberAngels—Multiple resource website devoted to online safety (US) <www.cyberangels.org/about.php>

From the Alliance of Guardian Angels, this award winning site hosts pages for parents and a learning centre for children. Of particular use is the cyber security page, providing links to information about dealing with common threats to online security.

KidsHealth for Parents—Article (US) <kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/net_safety.html>

This article for parents about Internet safety briefly outlines the following issues: Internet safety laws; online protection tools; how to get involved in kids' online activities; basic rules; taking caution in chat rooms; and warning signs to watch out for.

National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children—Internet Safety links (US) <www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/ResourceServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=0#Resource_2>

Focusing on Internet related child exploitation, this web page contains links to some good resources to assist parents and children to stay safe on the Internet. These include; background information, statistical information, safety guidelines and prevention materials to assist parents and children to stay safe on the Internet.

NetSmartz Workshops—A program of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (US) <www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx>

This website contains a wide range of resources devoted to keeping children safe when they use the Internet. There are materials for parents and guardians, educators, teenagers and children, and

Who's chatting to your kids?—Queensland Police Resource <www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/personalSafety/children/childProt>

A brochure published by the Queensland Police Service's Task Force Argos. This brochure provides information to parents on Internet safety for children and young people. It discusses social networking, mobile phones, webcams and online gaming, and provides the types of things to look out for that indicate children could be at risk.

additional resources related to law enforcement. The site also houses two interactive workshops for children (NetSmartKids) and teenagers (NSTeens).

SafeTeens.com—Internet security tools for families (US)

Aside from providing practical resources for families to ensure the safety of their teenagers, a range of articles and real-world scenarios are provided to highlight the importance of cyber security.

ConnectSafely—Forums, resources and advice about online connectivity (UK) <www.blogsafety.com/category/Connectsafely-Forums/3>

Launched by Childnet International, the ConnectSafely webpage provides information about blogging and social networking. On this website you will find useful information on how to get the most out of using blogs and learn about how to use social networking websites safely and positively. The site contains information for parents, educators, industry, children and young people.

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)—Hotline for reporting criminal online content (UK)

IWF's mission is to work in partnership with Internet service providers, telecommunication companies, mobile operators, software providers, the police, Government and the public to minimise the availability of online criminal content, particularly child sexual abuse images. Primarily this site allows users to report any child sexual abuse images from around the world that may violate the IWFs recommended guidelines.

KidSMART—Interactive tool for children's online education (UK) <www.kidsmart.org.uk/>

Produced by Childnet International, this interactive page is a child friendly introduction to online computer usage. The "Net Nasties" page outlines a variety of potential hazards and provides suggestions on how to maintain safe Internet practices.

NetSafe—A resource hub for Internet safety (NZ) <www.netsafe.org.nz/>

The Internet Safety Group of New Zealand (ISG), via this website, provides cybersafety education for children, parents, schools, community organisations and businesses. The ISG is the Ministry of Education's "agent of choice" for cybersafety education in New Zealand, and so a good range of resources has been devoted to this site.

make-IT-safe—International campaign to make IT safe for children <www.make-it-safe.net/>

The goal of the make-IT-safe campaign, run by End Child Prostitution and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), is to encourage industry and governments from around the world to take responsibility for making online and interactive technologies safe for children and young people. Materials and resources are available for anyone wishing to become involved in the program.

Open Directory Project—Multiple links to issues about child safety on the Internet <www.dmoz.org/Computers/Internet/Child_Safety/>

The Open Directory Project is a database of classified web content edited by volunteer contributors. It offers information and software solutions aimed specifically at protecting children, and includes various options to filter and monitor products to help protect children from the hidden dangers of the Internet.

Virtual Global Taskforce—Making the Internet a safer place <www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/>

The Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) is an international alliance of law enforcement agencies working together to fight online child abuse and to make the Internet a safer place. The site offers latest news, advice and reporting mechanisms as part of its fight to protect children.

Cyberbullying—An interactive tool for children and teenagers <www.cyberbullying.info>

Visitors to this site can choose to take the interactive path or use the more traditional links to access information about cyberbullying. There are limited publications and downloads, however, the page devoted to reporting cyberbullies contains useful information about how best to approach this difficult issue.

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Author

Shaun Lohoar is a Project Officer at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

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Australian Institute of Family Studies