#DITTO

STAY SAFE ● HAVE FUN ● REPEAT

In this edition

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Foreword from
Alan Mackenzie

Hi there, I'm Alan Mackenzie.

I'm an independent consultant specialising in online safety, specifically within education to children, young people, schools and other organizations, and parents.

I'm a strong believer that technology, for the most part, is neutral; behaviour is the most important aspect.

To understand behaviour, we have to be a part of children's lives in order to understand what they're doing with technology and why.

We have to be curious and guide them to realise the wonderful opportunities that the online world gives to all of us, and be there to support them when they need it.

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Welcome to Edition 25 of #DITTO

I don't know about you but the year seems to be flying past at the moment and at last we've seen a change in the weather. As I sit here typing this during half term the sun is beaming in through the window and I fully intend taking advantage of a few days off.

If you're wondering about the relevance of the image on the front page, all will become clear on the following page with an article that seem a little strange, but I hope you get the point I'm trying to make, which then leads into an article from my good (online) friend Darren Laur who is from Canada and former law enforcement where he has a huge amount of experience of online investigations. Darren will give some thoughts on creating a digital balance as we approach the school summer holidays, but personally I think the information he is giving is relevant at any time.

Also contributing is my good friend Lee who introduces us to his questionnaire aimed at emotions, feelings, technology related covid changes and perceptions and an interesting disparity between what children said was happening and what parents said was happening.

There is a theme running through a few of the articles, which is screen usage and as ever I've tried to give you a range of viewpoints and opinions which I think is important.

I hope you enjoy this issue and as ever, if you would like to see something in here just let me know.

Stay safe.

Alan

Redressing the Balance

Screen time has been a hot topic for years particularly in relation to children and young people and the amount of time they are in front of screens gaming, watching YouTube videos or on their favourite social media apps. But I think the last 18 months have shown us that screen 'use' is something that we should all be mindful of, not just the younger generations.

But the balance is extremely difficult; if you take into account work commitments, home learning, catching up with friends and family, relaxing in front of the TV in the evening and much more, screens are embedded into our everyday lives, so the question of "how much screen time should I allow my children?" isn't an easy one to answer,

but equally we shouldn't just be asking the question from the perspective of our children, it applies to all of us.

From a personal perspective, I like many others was in front of a screen constantly during the lockdown periods, and even outside of lockdown much of my time is in front of a screen if I'm not in a school. During lockdown I would be on my computer from early morning until late afternoon, sometimes late evening. I got into a rut where I couldn't be bothered going out for a walk, habitually I would watch YouTube videos when I finished work and then, from dinner until late evening watch whatever new TV series was on Netflix, consistently binge-watching until the late (or early) hours. I was pushing work to one side, I developed new habits and they weren't good.

A couple of weeks ago I knew things needed to change, I had to get away, I'd had enough of sitting in my office. All creativity had disappeared, enthusiasm was non-existent and I'd had enough.

I'm lucky that I run my own diary, so on a whim I took myself away to Glencoe in the Scottish Highlands for a long weekend, just me and my camera. The images you see on these first few pages are a few of the hundreds of images I took, but more importantly the views, the peace and tranquillity were revitalising. Glencoe is my happy place, where nothing in the world matters apart from the views. That feeling of not having any email pings, screen notifications, WhatsApp Group messages, Teams meetings, spam phone calls offering me a better mobile phone deal is hard to describe, it's just peace and quiet. No pressure, no compelling reason to go onto Instagram, no deadlines. I have been lucky through previous careers to travel much of the world, but Glencoe is the one and only place my wife and I return to, at least annually.

Interestingly, over the past couple of weeks I have been speaking to students about this (predominantly Years 5-8). This was prompted by a school asking me to do so and overwhelmingly the majority of students stated they have had enough of screens and the screen time balance was a difficult one, exacerbated by home learning, socialising with friends and family online and much more. And I think this is a good time for all of us to reflect, comparing pre and post-lockdown: what was good, what wasn't so good, what worked and what didn't?

Pre-lockdown, screen time was always spoken about in a negative way and the conversations were always about the 'time' rather than the 'what', which is by far the most important aspect. But equally, even if the 'what' is positive, it still means there has to be a balance, and that balance will be different for every child, adult and young person. I love technology, I have spent the best part of the last 25 years in front of some sort of screen, but I also know that it is easy to get into a rut and that isn't good for our wellbeing. Find your balance and speak to your children why it is important to do so.

Alan

Darren Laur , the White Hatter, is a former law enforcement officer with 30 years of experience. He now runs a hugely successful digital literacy and education specialist company based in North America and travelling internationally.

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THE WHITE HATTER

Creating a Digital Onlife Balance

The term "onlife world" was coined by Professor Luciano Floridi. Although many parents see a difference between the online and the offline world, today, youth see it as one world, or what Professor Luciano Floridi has coined the "onlife" world. Remember, not every day needs to be a tech day, but when it is, the "power of three" can help find the balance when it comes to screen activity.

Now that the 2020/21 school year is coming to an end, parents are concerned that because of COVID, many outdoor summertime activities will once again be limited, resulting in their child wanting to spend more time online, a concern for many parents. Over the past year, there has been a real push by some special interest groups advising parents to limit screen time, given what they believe to be the negative emotional, psychological, physical, and social effect it has on youth and teens.

Important note – this is something that is not supported in the good academic peer-reviewed research, specific to balanced screen activity, that we speak about in our free web-book called Parenting in an Online World (link **HERE**).

What are well-respected researchers saying specifically to youth and their technology use, "the question should not be how much time is your child spending online, but rather what are they doing with that time?" As Professor Sonia

Livingstone has stated, the measurement shouldn't be screen time, but rather their screen activity (link **HERE**).

Too many parents still like to reminisce about what it was like when they were kids and apply those thoughts and feelings to how youth today should be spending their leisure time. I'm sure some of the parents reading this article can remember when their parent said, "when I was your age this is what I did during my summer holidays …." However, when today's parent was young, the internet, social media, and digital technology either did not exist or was very limited in their accessibility and use. Remember, the iPhone was first sold in 2007, so it has only been around now for about fourteen years. This generation of youth is the first generation to be raised in a world where they know nothing but digital. This fact is why attempting to apply past norms and behaviours from our youth, specific to leisure time, has very little relevance to today's teen "onlife" world. As we share with parents:

"When we share our concerns with our kids about their onlife world, we should do so in a way that ties into where they are today, and is relevant to their life and appeals to their intelligence and experience."

We are not saying that parents should allow unrestrained free-range consumption of technology during the summer break, rather we are suggesting that a balanced use of technology, the internet, social media, and online gaming should be the goal.

The power of three is embedded in many aspects of our lives. In literature, for example, we have "Goldilocks and The Three Bears" whose porridge was #1 too hot, #2 too cold, or #3 just right. In sporting events like the Olympics, there are three medals that are awarded, #1 gold, #2 silver, and #3 bronze. In Christianity, they have the Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. In construction, a triangle with 3 equal sides is the most stable platform to build upon. This is why many bridges and buildings utilize triangles in their architecture, given that they provide significant structural integrity. In music, the third note of every scale provides the basic harmony that humans find pleasing.

Humans love choices, but not too many choices. Have you ever noticed that in many game shows, the contestant can pick what is behind curtain #1, curtain #2, or curtain #3? Again, demonstrating the power of three.

Our suggestion, and the reason for this article, let's gamify screen activity using the power of three, and apply it to youth and their onlife world to help them find a tech balance this summer.

So, how can we apply the power of three to Sonia Livingstone's concept of screen activity? First, let's break down the use of technology by teens into three categories:

Social Use

This category includes using social media to stay connected with friends via text messaging, or

interacting with their peers on social networks like Instagram, or engaging in an activity they enjoy, like online gaming.

Physical / Active Use

This is where a teen can integrate technology to become more physically active both inside and outside the home using apps such as Ring Fit, an exercising action role-playing game for the Nintendo Switch, Pokémon-Go, or Geocaching using a mobile device.

Creative & Educational Use

This is where youth use technology to learn coding (why just play a game when they can learn how to build one using coding), develop a personal website (create their own digital branding that they can control for sport, college, university, and job opportunities and to share their interests with others), learning how to type (which will allow you to code faster), create "how-to" videos, or to even watch educational shows and documentaries to increase their awareness of the onlife world.

Now that we have these three identified categories, let place them into a ranking, specific to daily online activity that we are recommending as a starting point, using the power of three:

1. Creative & Educational Use (3hrs +/-)

2. Social Use (2hrs +/-)

3. Physical / Active Use (1hr +/-)

This adds up to a total of six hours per tech day, four hours of which are encouraging teens to become producers and creators of content, and also to become more physically active through the integration of technology; only two hours are dedicated to passive consumption to connect with friends, or for the purposes of relaxation & fun - what we like to call "digital bubble gumming". Let's be honest, we all need time to decompress, especially during COVID,

and technology can be a great adjunct to making this happen. However, we find that too many parents utilize technology as a consumption-based digital pacifier with their kids, which is never healthy and should be avoided.

Once you frame the concept of the power of three specific to their screen activity with your child, focusing on how it allows them up to six hours of tech time each day, and sometimes more if okayed by you the parent. This will help your child to understand what a balanced onlife approach to technology should be this summer, and why.

If you consider that most youth, during the summer break, like to sleep in late and go to bed late, most will average about twelve hours of "wake" time each day. If you adopt the power of three, specific to screen activity, that means that the child still has six-plus hours of unused wake time for:

*   Breakfast, lunch, and dinner – which we recommend to be tech-free
*   Chores – to be done before screen activity is permitted
*   Engaging in other personal and family activities both inside and outside the home; learning how to skateboard or play basketball, learning how to play the guitar, or go for a family walk, hike, bike ride, family drive (we recommend that the car should be a tech-free zone unless going on a long trip) or watching a movie together as a family without phones, iPads, or laptops present.

None of the times associated with each category is set in stone, they need to remain flexible to meet the individual needs of each family. You could even split the times throughout the day. As an example, when it comes to the creative and educational use of technology, you can provide one hour in the morning, one hour in the afternoon, and one hour in the early evening. In fact, some days you may allow more time for "social activity", but this should be the exception, rather than the norm for youth and younger teens. Remember, we want to concentrate on the creative and educational use of technology, rather than treating it like a digital babysitter or digital pacifier.

Conclusion:

Again, we are not saying that everyday needs to be a full tech day, but when it is, the "power of three" is a good rule of thumb to help guide our kids. If your child has reached the 2hr social activity limit, then unless they now switch over to the creative, educational and physical use of their technology, then there is no more screen activity, unless the parent gives permission. Again, we would recommend that this permission is the exception rather than the rule.

Quickly establishing a balanced onlife routine will be important this summer, especially because many families will still be physically distancing because of COVID. Before your kids make the passive social consumption of technology a habitual routine this summer, use the power of three to help create a flexible and balanced onlife screen activity standard.

Digital Food For Thought

The White Hatter

Sexting and Sextortion

Note: this is an excerpt from my Online Safety Leads course, link HERE.

The term 'sexting' is a made-up media word and as such there are various definitions. For children (persons under the age of 18) the correct terminology is 'youth produced sexual images', so for the purpose of this article I'm defining sexting as:

When someone takes and/or shares an indecent image or video of themselves.

There is no strict definition of 'indecent' in law but again for the purpose of this article it is a sexual, naked or semi-naked image or video but can also relate to messages.

What is the legality?

The law is clear that the creation, storage, and distribution of sexually explicit images of children are offences, falling under Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978, amended by Section 45 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to extend the definition of children from under 16s to under 18s. Which theoretically means that anyone who takes an image, anyone who is sent an image (stored on the phone) and anyone who shares the image is committing an offence.

Whilst the law is black and white (it is illegal or it isn't), the law doesn't take into account the wide and varied motivations behind either taking or sharing such media. Equally, the law was made in the pre-smartphone era and was intended for adults taking/sharing images of children.

But there is a big difference between two young people who are in a relationship and consent to taking and sharing between each other compared to someone who has been blackmailed into taking and sharing. (Note I use the word 'consent' lightly here as it may be argued that consent cannot be given for something which is against the law).

In response to national concerns of young people being criminalised and their future being affected, in particular those who had 'consented', the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) released guidance to all local police forces in 2016. Drawn up by NPCC, the Home Office and the DBS, a new outcome code was agreed for forces in England and Wales called Outcome 21.

This is something which, if the police are called to investigate and determine that a crime has been committed but formal action is not in the public interest, they can apply Outcome Code 21 on the Police National Database. This code can only be used in cases where there is no evidence of exploitation or malicious intent and means that the crime is unlikely to appear on future records or checks.

Why does sexting happen?

Some of the reasons (the motivations) will be obvious, but one of the most comprehensive studies carried out in the UK has given us a great insight into the reasons why sexting happens.

Look At Me - Teens, Sexting and Risks is a study carried out by a good friend and fellow consultant, Adrienne Katz and Aiman El Asam. Released in July 2020 (link to study **HERE**), it is the most up to date and trustworthy study containing many valuable insights for professionals and parents alike.

The figures are taken from an annual study carried out with 14,944 young people aged 13 and over in 2019, of which 6,045 respondents answered questions on relationships, meet-ups and sexting.

Therefore, percentages given below reflect 6,045 respondents.

Sexting happens because (in descending order):

- I was in a relationship, I wanted to - 38%.
- I tried it for fun - 31%.
- None of these reasons - 30%.
- I thought I looked good - 27%.
- I wanted to see the reaction I would get from the other person - 19%
- I was in a relationship and I felt it was expected - 18%.
- I was pressured or blackmailed - 18%.
- I did not want to but felt I had to because others were doing it - 17%.
- I was tricked into doing it - 15%.

Those who have shared indecent images by age group:

- Age 13 - 4%
- Age 14 - 7%
- Age 15 and over - 17%

The reasons above are the most common reasons and as you can see, some are 'growing up' behaviours, but others give further concern, e.g. pressure (perhaps peer on peer) or blackmail (see sextortion below).

Vulnerability

According to various news stories, sexting is endemic: everyone is doing it. But this is simply not the case and vulnerability plays a huge role. Again, referring to and extrapolating information from the study, multiple vulnerabilities increase the likelihood of sexting:

- 1 - 2 vulnerabilities - 8%.
- 3 - 4 vulnerabilities - 14%.
- 5 or more vulnerabilities - 26%.

So what are these vulnerabilities? In ascending order:

- English not a first language - 7%.
- Mental health difficulty - 12%.
- Vision impaired - 12%.
- Learning difficulty - 13%.
- Worry about life at home - 14%.
- Anger issues - 14%.
- Hearing Loss - 15%.
- Speech difficulty - 16%.
- I am autistic - 16%.
- I am a carer - 16%.
- Longstanding physical illness - 20%.
- I have an eating disorder - 23%.
- Care experienced - 26%

As you can see with these basic details, sexting isn't what the media portrays it to be, it is much more difficult. It is clearly a concern and is the reason why, although there may be school policies, every incident must be treated and investigated individually.

But whilst every incident is a concern, of most significant concern are those who are pressured or blackmailed.

Sextortion

Much like sexting there are various definitions, but for the purpose of this article I'm going to define it as the act of coercing a person into taking and sharing indecent images or videos one or more times and coercing a person to pay money as a result of sharing explicit images or videos. And as you saw with the vulnerability statistics above, 18% were coerced into taking and sharing an image.

According to the National Crime Agency there were 1,304 cases of sextortion that were reported in 2017, which is 3 times more than were reported in 2015. More recently they have reported that there has been a significant increase during the Covid-19 lockdown period where criminals were preying on the fact that more people would be socialising online.

These criminals are often organized crime gangs who will use apps such as dating apps and an image of an attractive woman to entice people, but equally it isn't always dating apps and it isn't always coercion from someone you don't know, it can also happen from someone you know, such as an ex-partner.

Here are 2 example sextortion cases:

Example 1:

In May 2020, a man tried to blackmail over 20 victims by threatening to distribute their private photos. He tricked people into clicking on a link which had been shared on social media. This link supposedly gave information about the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This was used because it was topical at the time, lots of people were interested in or actively searching for information about Covid.

When people clicked on the link it then prompted them to log in with their Snapchat details, but the link was a scam. Essentially it was a phishing scam where criminals harvest usernames and passwords with false links. The man then had the usernames and passwords so he could log in to find any private or explicit images, steal those images and coerce the victims.

Example 2:

In this second example a young man used a popular dating app and he was contacted by somebody who was pretending to be a webcam model. Over the course of a couple of days this webcam model lured the young man into a false sense of security and managed to gain his trust. Quite quickly the conversations got very personal and quite intimate and the supposed webcam model said that she would send some explicit images if the young man sent a nude of himself, which he did. With this one image the supposed webcam model was then able to try and blackmail him.

Although embarrassed, the young man realised he needed help, which he got, and managed to prevent the blackmail from occurring.

Clearly these are very concerning and yet often, the victim will not recognise they are being groomed to be extorted, equally it can be more complicated than that. For example, ask a young male about the concerns and legality if an adult male contacts a young girl and talks sexually with them. The likelihood is they will know the answer. Now ask the same question, but this time say it is an adult female who is contacting a young male. In many cases the answer is significantly different, many young males wouldn't see contact from adult female as a problem.

Useful Links and Resources

I have included some sample links below which both schools and parents will find useful, but as with any resource check that you are okay with it first, particularly in relation to age appropriate.

So you got naked online - free resource which advises young people who may find themselves in a situation where they (or a friend) have put a sexting image or video online and have lost control over that content - Click HERE

SEND version - Click HERE

Risky Pics (Youtube video) - you can use this to generate a discussion - Click HERE

National Strategic Assessment

NCA
National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency have released their latest strategic assessment. It is a huge report but the big takeaway for me is that despite big advances in investigation and detection, things are getting worse across child sexual abuse, cyber crime and much more.

One such example was in August last year where a 2-year investigation resulted in the arrest of an online predator who admitted to 146 sexual abuse and blackmail offences against 67 victims aged 4 to 14 years. He coerced both adults and children into providing sexual and degrading images on the promise of payment, then subsequently blackmailed them to provide further degrading material.

You can download the full PDF report **HERE**.

Key Points:

• The threat of child sexual abuse continues to grow and this has been exacerbated by rising online activity, particularly over the past year. CSA covers a range of different offences which occur either online, offline or moving between the two.

• NCA believe there are between **550,000** and **850,000** UK individuals who pose a sexual risk to children. This figure does not take into account offenders outside the UK targeting UK victims, nor does it include peer-on-peer offenders, which we know is a growing concern.

• The NSPCC has reported a 60% average monthly increase in contacts made about children experiencing online CSA during and after the first national lockdown compared to pre-lockdown figures.

• The Internet Watch Foundation have reported a 77% global increase in the number of reports that included self-generated indecent imagery which includes material consensually shared.

• The increased use of end-to-end encryption on platforms for the purposes of privacy will increase the risk of CSA as communications etc. will not be able to be detected.

Thoughts:

Despite the excellent work I come across in schools and the increased awareness and vigilance with parents it is clear that things are getting worse year on year. The police can only do so much, as with every other public service resources are very limited and investigations/detections can take a long time. Children are children and they are vulnerable purely because of their age and inexperience. They will take risks (particularly younger teenagers) and they will push boundaries.

Education and awareness is the first and most important line of defence, and that doesn't just mean education at school, it has to happen at home as well. Open, honest, non-judgemental conversations with our children are so important and as they get older they won't like those conversations, but what they don't like and what is necessary are two different things. There is lots of information and help **HERE** to help you with those conversations.

From Survive To Thrive:

When it comes to information, support and guidance for parents, particularly in relation to keeping up with risks and issues to children and young people, I always point in the direction of Internet Matters, the NSPCC, and my good friends Cath and Lee who write in this magazine.

Internet Matters consistently come out with new, really useful studies and reports which help to keep us all up to date. Their newest report, Survive to Thrive, asks parents about their children's use of technology, their concerns and attitudes to their children's online lives and perceptions of the impact on their wellbeing at regular intervals between Jan 2020 and March 2021. Whilst aimed at parents, I think the information in this report is equally useful for schools; firstly there is lots of information in here that teachers can use to strike up classroom discussions, and secondly for DSL's in order to be aware of the issues.

I would highly recommend you read the report which not only gives the facts but also useful tips and advice, but here are some interesting takeaways from the report:

• Gaming is the main activity but live streaming and the use of chatrooms are on the rise.

• There has been a 32% increase in screen time on weekdays (2.2 hours up to 2.9 hours) and weekends (3.5 hours up to 4 hours).

• More children are spending money online, a 42% increase. Parents of vulnerable children reported a 64% increase.

• Over half of parents say their children's online world has had a positive impact on their life since the beginning of the pandemic, but:

• More than half of parents agree that their child has become too reliant on online technology.

• Children with vulnerabilities have been most impacted.

• 47% of parents of vulnerable children told us that children have become more anxious as a result of spending more time online over the last 12 months.

There is a lot more useful information than what I have put here but I want to finish this article with a couple of thoughts:

Sadly, it is no surprise to see a rise in issues that our children face. More time at home, more time online equals enhanced risk. That's just a simple but unfortunate fact, but equally parents and schools will have struggled to find a balance between educating, monitoring online activities as well as a myriad of other things. One surprising fact for me was in regards to time online. In my talks with students over the last few weeks the time is significantly more simply because many children and young people had little else to do; all education and social time was online. But regardless of the time, we all need space to rebalance our lives, which was why I wrote that first article in this magazine.

It's also important to note that research consistently shows children and young people who have real-world vulnerabilities are at more risk online and this is enhanced where those children face multiple vulnerabilities (you can read more about this in the Refuge and Risk report **HERE**).

Please do take the time and have a look through the report which you can find **HERE**.

Alan

TikTok

Each month I review a number of new apps and re-review older apps on behalf of the NSPCC for a number of different aspects including age verification, parental controls, safety and privacy controls, content, contact and much more. With the exception of **GoBubble** which is specifically designed for younger children I have yet to find an app that I feel is appropriately designed for children in <u>all</u> aspects, but some apps are striving to make improvements, one of those is TikTok. So on this page I thought it worthwhile to provide you with some information and links to their latest improvements.
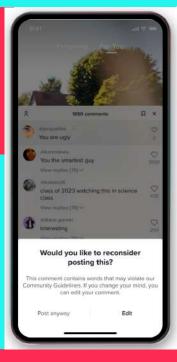
On the 20th May TikTok launched a new way for users to delete multiple comments (up to 100) or block multiple accounts in one go.

To use: long press on a comment or tap the pencil icon in the upper left corner which will open a window of options. Select up to 100 comments or accounts and delete, report or block. See **HERE** for further information.
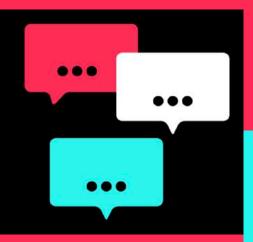
On 10th March new tools to promote kindness were released in their goal to help foster kindness in the TikTok community. There are two features: the first gives users control over the comments on their videos and the second prompts people to reconsider posing unkind or inappropriate comments.

Within Review Comments, you have the option to filter all comments, filter soap and offensive comments or filter your own keywords.

See **HERE** for further information.

Users who have created an account stating they are aged 13-16 have enhanced privacy controls from January this year. By default, accounts will be set to private, meaning that only someone who the user approves as a follower can view their videos.

There are also tightened options for video comments where users can choose Friends or No One. The Everyone comment setting has been removed. Only users over 16 can send DM's (private messages) and live streams, and only users 18+ can buy, send or receive virtual gifts.

See **HERE** for further information.

SAFETY CENTRE

TikTok has completely overhauled their Safety Centre which now has user guides, parent guides and much more.

You can find their Safety Centre **HERE.**

UKCIS
Digital Passport

Internet Matters have been producing some amazing content recently. As well as the Survive to Thrive report mentioned a couple of pages ago, they have also released a new resource for care experienced children and young people, and their carers.

The Digital Passport is a communication tool created to support children and young people with care experience to talk with their carers about their online lives. Although aimed at parents, I think this would be an excellent resource to use in schools too.

There are three parts to the passport which provide structure and resources to support open conversations. For more information and to download the free resources see **HERE**.

Privacy and Security Checklist

Roblox is a hugely popular game. With hundreds of millions of users and the means to interact with others all around the world there still seems to be a common misconception that this is a game that is played by younger children, but this isn't the case, it's popular across all ages. The vast majority of players just want to play and have fun, but when you have that many players and the ability to communicate with anyone the risks related to content, contact and conduct are enhanced. So it's important to know what settings are in the game, and apply the settings that are appropriate for your child. It's also vitally important that parents are vigilant. In one recent case I'm aware of a child was chatting to what was supposedly another child within Roblox. This other 'child' talked the young girl how to set up a TikTok account without her parents finding out. Once this was done the girl was groomed via private chat on TikTok.
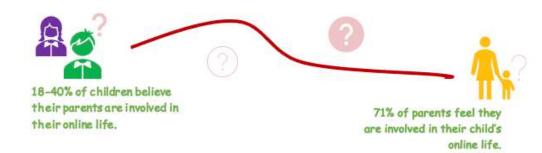
South West Grid for Learning have a really useful guide which takes you through all the settings that are available and how to apply them. For schools, it's worth asking the children what settings are available and how to apply them. Commonly I find they don't. The guide is free and can be downloaded **HERE**.

Parents

In this new section to DITTO we are going to be providing some more information direct to parents and families. This month, we are providing you with some statistics we have gained through speaking to and questioning parents and children across many of our schools in the UK.

During Spring 2021, we gained 2,700 parent responses and 7,000 pupil responses to our comprehensive questionnaire aimed at emotions, feelings, technology related covid changes and perceptions. Interestingly we began to recognise a disparity between what children said was happening and what parents said was happening. Keeping in mind, this was entirely anonymous to promote open and honest answers. So why the difference in opinion? After some additional work, in speaking with both groups that answered, we have discovered something interesting….

Online Safety UK

18-40% of children believe their parents are involved in their online life.

71% of parents feel they are involved in their child's online life.

What this tells us, is that we believe the perception of 'being involved' from a child's point of view and a parent are quite different. A parent viewpoint appears to be based on restrictions they impose and boundaries they have set, whereas a child's viewpoint is based around conversation, questions, and practical involvement. So, what needs to be the focus? Open conversation with some time spent just listening and understanding their view of their world, trying to not bring our age, experience, and upbringing into the equation at that point.

"Don't let yourself become so concerned with raising a good kid that you forget you already have one."

The difference from one end of a school to the other is still quite vast. But we are noticing that the gap in the use of a wider range os social media is shrinking, with many more Year 3's now using TikTok.

Year 3

Mainly use Netflix, YouTube and Disney+, suggesting passive screen time is high.

27% using TikTok, 13% use Snapchat, 75% play Minecraft.

Year 6

With passive screen time remaining high, further increases in gaming and social media have increased overall screen time.

60% using TikTok, 73% playing Minecraft, 73% using WhatsApp.

Year 7

Mainly use Netflix, YouTube and WhatsApp as well as big percentage playing online games.

59% using TikTok.

55% playing Among Us.

Year 11

The trend changes towards heavy social media use including live streaming. An even higher proportion are now gaming at this age.

69% using TikTok, 75% still playing Minecraft.

Have you noticed how Minecraft is played by the same amount of 7 year olds as it is 16 year olds? This game has such a vast amount of content, easy gameplay and adventure to it that although how they use the game adapts with age, the popularity of Minecraft is the same from children through to adults.

Tap here to discover more about Minecraft

The Curiosity Beast!

This little guy is curious about the new feature brought out by TikTok that prompts people to consider their 'not so nice' comment before posting it. What the Curiosity Beast would like to know is, would this stop you from posting?
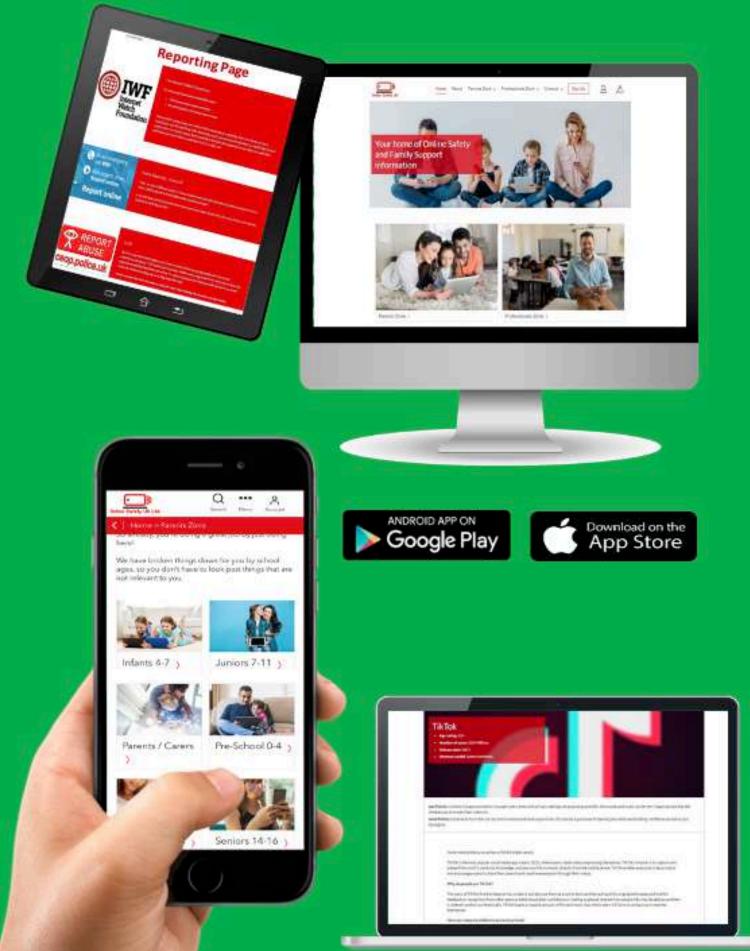
He is also worried about the amount of young people who feel online strangers are not in any way dangerous to speak with. He wonders what this means and worries that the confidence could lead to bad things happening to some children. What do you think?

78% of 11-16 year olds said they would talk to strangers online.

Find out more on the Curiosity Beast by going to his web page HERE

Start your journey today!

Tap anywhere on this page to Become an Online Safety Family Member

ANDROID APP ON
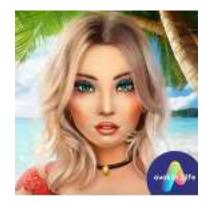**Google Play**

Download on the
App Store

Only Fans, not an app but this is advertised and heavily linked with TikTok. Only Fans is a website that is purely based on users paying for subscriptions to photos and videos of a sexual nature of other users. These are not adult workers, most of the time they are ordinary people with other jobs but the realisation that can earn up to £100,000 a month from selling images and videos of themselves is too appealing for some.

CLICK THE APP ICON TO READ MORE

Avakin Life received some media attention recently after concerns were published by other users that the users within the game would approach children to "hook up" online. It is widely believed that this game should be 18+ but it is in fact a 13+ game. This one is worth a quick read and open conversation with your children as to whether they have ever played such games in the past and how their experience of them has been.

CLICK THE APP ICON TO READ MORE

Since the lockdown, there has been a major increase in video media consumption. From Netflix, YouTube, Prime Video to this, Disney+. This is now the second largest Video Streaming Platform in the UK but did you realise it may still be appropriate to set some parent restrictions on an app like this? Even though it is Disney? Check it out to find out more.

CLICK THE APP ICON TO READ MORE

You cannot put a price on the value of open and honest communication within the home.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

I'm quite often asked what the best resources for parents are. Not an easy question to answer as it would depend on what your concerns are, your level of knowledge, or a particular risk that you would like more information on.

As well as the links from the articles in this magazine, below are 4 of what I believe to be the best,

Common Sense Media
To learn more about the games or apps your children are using, Common Sense Media covers thousands, which includes advice and reviews from other parents:

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

Internet Matters
Tons of age-specific related information created specifically for parents. Includes information to set up devices.

https://www.internetmatters.org/

YouTube
With over 5.5 billion videos, if you need to know something there's a good chance it's here. Use simple searches such as, "What is..." "How do I..."

https://www.youtube.com

School
The school your child goes to is a wealth of information. If you're not sure or don't know where to turn to, they can and will help. Find out what what your child does in school about online safety so that you can replicate the same advice at home.

Contribute to the magazine

I'm always on the lookout for great content to share with schools and parents, but I also know that people have their own individual stories to tell. This information can be hugely beneficial for everybody.

• Are you a parent who has experienced something with your child? What was it and what did you do? Has your child experienced something and would he/she like to share their advice with others?

• Are you a school that has experienced a series of incidents? How did you tackle this? Do you have an innovative way to engage with specific online safety topics in the school?

• Do you have an opinion or a thought-provoking idea?

Drop me an email and let me know your thoughts. Everything can be kept anonymous if you wish.

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