**NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES TRAINING LTD**
**DIGITAL SAFETY DURING COVID-19**

**Background and context:**
The impact of COVID-19 means that most of us will be at home for an extendedperiod and are likely to be spending increasing amounts of time online.

The online world is a necessity for many learners in accessing college work and itdelivers huge benefits, not least in enabling us to stay connected to family and friends during this period. However, many parents and learners may feel concerned about the content they are able to access.

Although rare, there is a risk that increased online activity and feelings of stress and isolation may be exploited by negative influences and online groomers of allkinds to target vulnerable young people directly.

An understanding of digital safety will help parents and carers safeguard lovedones from a range of harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise vulnerable young people.

Extremists may use the COVID-19 outbreak to promote hateful views, for example through conspiracy theories blaming a particular group for the virus, orthrough spreading misinformation regarding these groups' responses to it.

**What steps can I take to keep myself safe online?**
Firstly, remember your college induction and safeguarding basics: **Safeguarding team** at NWCS; Paul Sheron, Annette Swinnerton & Sylvia Jones are there to help you if you have a concern. Remember if it doesn't feel right it probably isn't!

**What are the signs of online exploitation?**
Online exploitation is often hard to recognise because it is a complex issue.When it comes to being drawn into extremist ideas online, sometimes thereare clear warning signs, in other cases the changes are less obvious.

Although some of these traits may be quite common among teenagers, takentogether they could be indicators that you or a friend are at increased risk or may need some help:

- Exploring new and unusual websites, chat forums and platforms
- Harmful influences may push individuals towards platforms with agreater degree of anonymity
- Joining new or secret groups since isolation
- Speaking with new friends or being secretive about chats duringonline gaming or in forums
- A strong desire to seek new meaning, identity and purpose
- Using language, you wouldn't normally use or expect yourselfand friends to know or use
- Watching, sharing or creating films online linked to religious,political or racial hate
- Becoming increasingly argumentative or refusing to listen todifferent points of view

**Should I be concerned about being exploited online?**

The above are merely signs that help might be needed, but you know yourself and friends best and you will want to speak with them first. Check inwith them and ask about what they are viewing, who they are speaking to and how they are feeling. You can do this if you have concerns with your colleagues, our safeguarding leads, mental health champions or your teacher/trainer. This might feel difficult, but here are some pointers to help you:

- Get someone older that you trust to listen to your fears and worries
- Listen fully to what they have to say
- Advice and support is available to help us understand onlineexploitation and to understand COVID-19.

If you are finding it hard to cope with bereavement and grief - advicecan be found here.


**What help is available if someone is being exploited online?**

- It is important to safeguard loved ones from a range of online harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise vulnerable people.

- If you are concerned that you or a friend may be at risk of radicalisation, helpis available to make sure you get the support you need to move away from harmful influences.

- Teachers, healthcare practitioners, social workers, the police, charities, psychologists and religious leaders work together to safeguard those vulnerable to radicalisation through a safeguarding programme known as Prevent. This was part of your safeguarding training with NWCS.

- Prevent protects people from being drawn into hateful extremism – regardless of the ideology. It works in a similar way to safeguarding processes designed to protect people from gangs, drug abuse, and physicaland sexual exploitation.

- Receiving support through Prevent is voluntary, confidential and not any formof criminal sanction. It will not show up on any checks or negatively affect an individual's future in any way.
- The type of support available is wide-ranging, and can include help with education or careers advice, dealing with mental or emotional health issues,or digital safety training for parents; it all depends on the individual's needs.

- With this specialist help, vulnerable people across the country have movedaway from supporting hateful extremism, enabling them to live more stableand fulfilling lives.

**How can I access support and advice for a loved one being radicalised?**

- As with other safeguarding functions, Prevent is still operating during this time and is here to support families in times of need.

- If you are worried that you or a loved one is being radicalised, you can callthe police on 101 to get advice or share a concern so that they can get safeguarding support. Alternatively, you can contact your local authority safeguarding team for help.

- Contacting the authorities will not get the individual into trouble if a criminalact hasn't been committed. The local authority or police will discuss your concerns, suggest how they can best help and give you access to relevantsupport and advice.

- If you think someone is in immediate danger, or if you see or hear something that may be terrorist-related, trust your instincts and call 999 or the confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321.

**I have seen hateful content online that concerns me and could be harmful. What should I do?**

- Prevent takes robust action to tackle radicalisation online and to counter the ideology promoted by extremists. This includes removing terrorist-related material and action to suspend the accounts of those fuelling these views.

- Any member of the public can report terrorist content they find online through the GOV.UK referral tool. The Action Counters Terrorism campaign provides more information on this.

**Further resources**

There are resources available to help you understand and protect yourchild from different harms online.

- Educate Against Hate Parents' Hub provides resources and government advice for parents and carers on keeping young people safe from extremism.
- Let's Talk About It provides support for parents and carers to keep childrensafe from online radicalisation.
- UK Safer Internet Centre has guides on the privacy settings, parental controlsand internet safety features of the major internet service providers.
- Parent Zone works with Prevent to provide digital safety advice for parents.
- Thinkuknow provides resources for parents and carers to help keep childrensafe online.
- Childnet has developed guidance for parents and carers to begin a conversation about online safety, and on keeping under-fives safe online.
- Parent Info provides digital support and guidance for parents and carers from leading experts and organisations
- NSPCC guidance for parents and carers is designed to help keep children safe online. Their Net Aware website, produced in collaboration with O2, provides specific safety information on popular apps and websites.
- Childline can provide advice and support if your child is worried, from dialling 0800 1111 or downloading the 'For Me' app.

Authorised by Paul Sheron
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**Online Safety Guidelines**

**BE WISE**
Always ask **W**hy a website or someone you make friends with on the Internet would need your personal information. Remember our safeguarding cautions are about your personal safety, online identity and exposure to extremist views and opinions.

Be **I**nspired**.** The Internet offers great tools for research, learning, discovering and creating.

Be **S**ecure**.** There are constantly new scams, hoaxes, viruses and spyware on the Internet. Install security software to keep your computer and data safe.

**E**valuate the stuff you read, see or receive through the Internet. Just becauseit's on the Internet does not make it true, reliable or genuine.

**BE SMART**
Keep **S**afe by being careful not to give out your personal information - such as your name, email, phone number, address, College name, any Bank details, PIN numbers or passwords - to people online.

**M**eeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous – Tell an adult and **Don't** do it alone!

**A**ccepting emails, messages on IM or opening files, pictures or texts frompeople you don't know or trust can lead to problems.

**R**eliable? Someone online may be lying to you about who they are.

**T**ell your parent or tutor immediately, if someone or something on-line makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

**Staying Safe on Social Networks and Instant Messenger**

- **Do you know everyone on your buddy or contacts list?** Think carefully about who is on your list. People on Instant Message and chat like Apps, may not be who they say they are, so a friend of a friend is not necessarily a friend!

- **Keep your personal information secret** when talking to someone you don't know in the real world. Also think about what visible information you have, for example in your Profile or Member directory.

- **Learn how to keep an archive/save a copy of your conversation**, and don't be afraid to tell someone you are saving your conversation with them.

- **Learn how to** block, ignore and report people. Report anything that makes you feel uncomfortable; if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

- **Check you know how,** to report something you feel uncomfortable about to the Messenger or Social Networking provider or use the CEOP 'Report Abuse' button on **NWCS**'s website pages.

- **Ask your safeguarding officer,** if there is anything at all that you feel unsure about or would like further advice or information on. There are other useful contacts in the Appendix of this Policy too!

- **Use a nickname**, not your real name, and a nickname that is not going to attract the wrong type of attention.

- **Keep your username and password private**, and change your password on a regular basis.

- **Don't reply to abusive messages**. Don't send abusive messages either. It's best not to say anything on IM or a Social Network that you wouldn't say to someone's face.

- Don't accept messages from people you don't know.

- **Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be very dangerous**. If you feel that you 'have to' meet, then for your own safety you **must tell your parent or carer** and take them with you – at least on the first visit – and meet in a public place in daytime.

- **Don't pass the buck** - if someone you have accepted on your buddy or contacts list is acting weird, don't pass them on to a friend. You could be putting your friend at risk. Just block them and report them to an adult, Parent or carer.

**Useful contacts**

**NSPCC Safeguarding Helpline**
Contact: http://www.nspcc.org.uk                0808 800 5000

**Merseyside police** on                         999 or 0151 709 6010

**Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre**    +44 (0)870 000 3344
*www.ceop.gov.uk*

**Tackling Extremism and Prevent Duty Contacts:**
**Channel**                                      0151-777-8505
**Email**: Special.Branch@merseyside.pnn.police.uk
Subject of all emails should be: CHANNEL

**Merseyside Police Prevent Engagement Team**    0151-777-8311
**Email**: Darren.F.Taylor@merseyside.police.uk

**Liverpool Local Authority Prevent Coordinator**   0151-233-7015
**Email**: Clive.Finch@liverpool.gov.uk