

Remember these FIVE P's for social networking:

POSITIVE:

Stay positive about social networking sites: try to strike a balance between educating children and young people to behave safely and trusting them to get on with it. Get involved yourself: ask them to help you set up a profile (even if you already know how) to test their knowledge and assess how they behave online.

PRIVACY:

Most sites have privacy settings and it's important to keep up with developments as they can often change. Discuss the value of privacy with children and encourage them to keep passwords secure and to use different ones for each service they use. Encourage them to only allow friends to see their details, and to remember that unless they know these friends in the real world that their online friends are really strangers. Don't allow open social networking profiles.

PHOTOS:

It's only natural to want to post photos online, but encourage children to think about what they contain: does it show a school sweatshirt with a logo that could be used to track them down? Do they have permission of the others in the photo to post it? Photos can easily be copied and altered so children and young people should ask themselves "would I want a relative or future employer to see this?"

POSTINGS:

Help your child to think before they post. Set some ground rules about what a child says about others as much as themselves. What begins as a joke or gossip can escalate and cause real pain to friends which cannot be taken back.

POLICE:

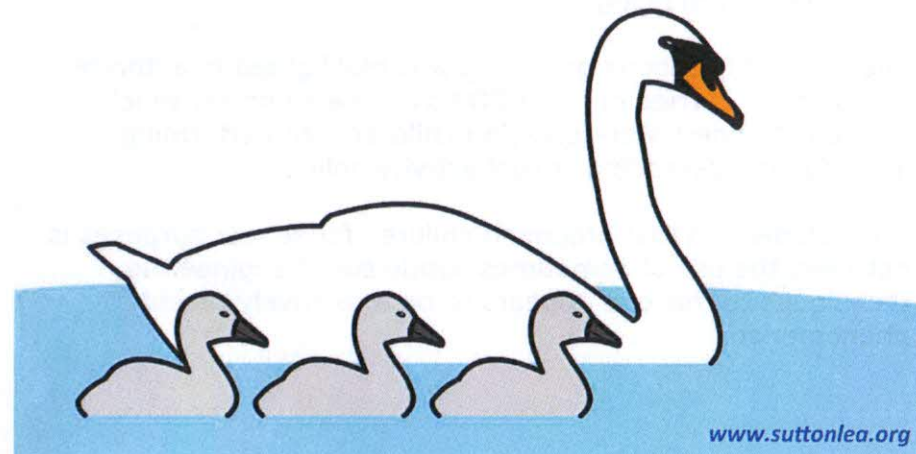
It's really important to encourage your child to tell you about any inappropriate activity or material they come across. If they are being harassed by somebody keep the evidence and report them to the service provider. If you suspect a child has been the subject of inappropriate sexual contact report it to CEOP at:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk via the CEOP Report button.



Facebook

A guide for parents, carers and teachers about social networking websites.



www.suttonlea.org

CEOP, which exists to protect children online, has seen the number of reports of inappropriate behaviour rise to more than 1,000 a month – up from just 400 a few years ago.

Action needed: Dr Zoe Hilton, Head of Safeguarding at CEOP has said 'children are taking risks'.

Zoe Hilton, head of safeguarding at CEOP, said: 'Children are making themselves vulnerable to adult offenders who seek to talk to them, establish a relationship with them and get them to do things they are not comfortable with.

'Children take risks and can be quite naive. It can be exciting for them to chat to people they did not know before. Many are on social networking sites where they like to share personal information.

'Hardened paedophile groomers are often quite skilled at getting children to do things they do not want to do, especially since the rise of the webcam. All computers are webcam-enabled now.

'They persuade children to go on the webcam and expose themselves, persuade them to send pictures. It can be the first hook to meeting and further grooming.' She added: 'A lot of children are online now. It is part of their life and growing up, so all the sexual experimentation our generation did offline, they feel natural doing online.'

The issue of Facebook grooming was highlighted in a 'threat assessment' carried out by CEOP over the summer, which warned offenders were coercing children into performing 'harmful and degrading sexual activity online'.

It concluded: 'Whilst grooming children for sexual purposes is not new, the use of sometimes subtle social engineering techniques to this end appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon.

'Without sufficient recognition and intervention from law enforcement, there is every likelihood that this trend will grow. With the forecasted growth of internet use across the world, particularly in developing nations, it is increasingly likely that UK children will also be targeted by offenders based overseas.'

The document said that offenders were increasingly adept at 'targeting' those who were making themselves vulnerable online, by not having privacy settings, for example.

It added: 'Offenders will use various methods to coerce a child into giving their username and password for a social networking site.

'Compromising the child's social networking presence in this way is used by the offender to get the child to perform sexual acts or send indecent images online.

'This then forms the basis for further threats and incitement to perform increasingly serious sexual acts.' Jon Brown, of the NSPCC, said: 'Sex offenders often prowl the internet looking for victims they can lure into potentially dangerous situations.

'Children should not reveal their identities, share personal information or send photographs to any strangers they encounter online and must never meet them unless they are going with an adult or someone else they trust.'

Facebook said it had a 'zero tolerance' to child exploitative content. A spokesman added: 'We have built complex technical systems that either block the creation of harmful content, including in private groups, or flag it for quick review by our team of investigations professionals.'



Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk to report an incident.