

Online Safety Newsletter

May 2024

Is being online affecting our child's mental health?

There are many positives to being online, but we do need to be aware of the negative aspects including those that may impact our child's mental health and wellbeing, for example:

- **Social media** (spending too much time on social media, comparing ourselves to others, filtered images and desire to achieve likes).
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Seeing inappropriate content**
- **Constantly connected/information overload**
- **Excessive screentime**
- **Negative impact on our sleep**



Further information

- Childnet discusses digital wellbeing in more detail and includes top tips and conversation starters: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/digital-wellbeing/>
- The NSPCC provides further information about mental health including signs to look out for and how to get further support: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/>

Warning

Rating of 13+ (recently lowered from 16), a warning that children as young as nine have been seen inappropriate content. If your child is in group settings as by default, group settings are set to 'open to everyone,' which means anybody can add them without their approval. You can change this setting to 'invite only' so that only contacts can add them to groups without their approval. If you are not a contact wants to add them to a group, you will need to send them an invite.

Read more about the risks of joining groups and how to use reporting/blocking tools. You can find out more here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/articles/cy0l4z8n1p9o>

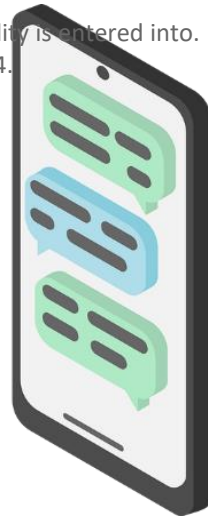
Digital Addiction

Are you worried that your child is addicted to being online/on their device? Recent research from Ofcom reported that “34% of parents of children aged 3-4 said it was hard to control it, rising to half (49%) of parents of children aged 16-17.”* Bark have produced a blog which discusses what addiction is, how to recognise the signs and examples of what digital addiction can look like. You can find the blog here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/digital-addictions/>

[*source:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2024> accessed 24.4.24]



Misinformation online

There is a lot of information online that is incorrect/fake or misleading and it can sometimes be difficult for adults to distinguish between what is true and what is fake, never mind for younger people. We need to develop digital literacy skills in our children by encouraging them to think critically about what they read online and to fact check. Both the BBC and Channel 4 have fact checking areas on their websites:

- https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check
- <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/>

One way to start the conversation would be to play a game such as ‘Can you spot the signs of fake news?’ from the BBC:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwfm8hv>

Further information

- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/online-issue/misinformation>

