

# ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Providing online safety information for Parents



## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT INTERNET-CONNECTED TOYS?

### In this issue:

- How much do you know about internet connected toys
- All about sexting
- Screen and Social media research



**Strategic Alliance**

A consumer group is urging major retailers to withdraw a number of “connected” or “intelligent” toys likely to be popular at Christmas, after finding security failures that it warns could put children’s safety at risk.

Tests carried out by Which? with the German consumer group Stiftung Warentest, and other security research experts, found flaws in Bluetooth and wifi-enabled toys that could enable a stranger to talk to a child. The investigation found that four out of seven of the tested toys could be

used to communicate with the children playing with them. Security failures were discovered in the Furby Connect, i-Que Intelligent Robot, Toy-Fi Teddy and CloudPets. In particular, the kinds of issues to consider are is there the ability to change the default passwords so others cannot access the device, is there a camera, is there an unsecured Bluetooth connection? For more information see our more detailed guidance at

<http://dcdhub.org/connected-toys/>

This Christmas, there will have been more devices and games than ever before bought for children. As parents, there are some issues to consider:

When considering buying a device, do some research. Many retailers have reviews of the devices and there are also independent reviews carried out by consumer groups such as Which. Check for features and prices.

When you have got the device at home, get the device out of the box and learn how it works. If necessary set up parental controls that will restrict what younger children can do, for example switching off in-app purchases. As well as keeping your children safe, this also helps frustration on the big day. Use YouTube if you are struggling to work out what to do

Particularly for new devices, make sure that any conversations about what the ground rules are going to be happen beforehand if children know

what they are getting or as soon as possible after they have received the device: this should include how long they can use a device, where it is to be used and stored overnight, how much access you are going to have and how monitoring is going to work. You might want to write this down in a family agreement

In relation to games, consider whether the game you are thinking about buying for your child is appropriate or whether they are mature enough to join online gaming communities. If you are looking about information about online gaming, Childnet have produced a new leaflet for parents. This can be downloaded from <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/gaming-%E2%80%93-resources-parents-and-carers> together with other information about how to set up gaming devices, shoppers' checklist and other information. More information can be found at [Ask about Games](#).



# ALL ABOUT SEXTING

## What is it?

We are getting more reports from parents that they have found inappropriate sexual pictures of their own child or another child on their child's devices. Understandably, many parents initial reaction is to contact the police. We would encourage parents to educate themselves about this issue so that if it doesn't happen they are able to deal with it in the most appropriate way.

Young people will often refer to this behaviour as sending nudes: historically police and other professionals have called it sexting but it is now referred to as youth produced sexual imagery to reflect the fact that sharing is happening between young people and that it may be images or videos.

## Why do young people do it?

Young people will send this type of imagery for many different reasons, including within their relationships, as a form of flirting, or being pressurised or even blackmailed to

provide images. Some young people will send imagery of others in order to humiliate or embarrass someone, or even sometimes as a joke.

## What do you need to do?

It may be that you simply need to speak to your child and delete the images from their devices and accounts, and give education or apply relevant sanctions at home. If other young people from within school are involved, you may need to contact the school to inform them.

School can investigate and deal with this incident, including searching phones and deleting imagery, as long as there are no factors that require referral (see below). School is usually the most appropriate place to report these types of incidents in the first instance. They can often deal with it without involving the police which can be beneficial to the young people involved.

It may be you wish to contact the police: you need to consider that if you contact the police, they will have to record the incident and that your child's details will be recorded on this incident. To avoid any further issues, parents and carers should not do anything which in effect could result in their breaking the law, such as taking a copy of the imagery on their own device.

## What happens if it is reported to police?

Police will record details of any incident: if this involves the possession or sharing or

an indecent image then we must create a crime record. If the image is of a naked young person, a topless girl, displays genitals or is overtly sexual imagery of young people in their underwear, this image is likely to be an indecent image and is against the law to possess or to share. In most cases, where there are no aggravating factors such as a significant age gap, or extreme imagery or somebody being threatened to provide images, the police will not look to investigate the incident but will deal with it by education. If there are aggravating factors, then police may carry out an investigation. If there are no aggravating factors, or in those cases where an initial investigation shows a full investigation is not required, we will deal with the incident in a way that it is unlikely that this record will be disclosed in the future by Disclosure and Barring or police vetting checks.

We will also provide you with a copy of Youth produced sexual imagery: Advice and guidance for young people, parents and carers. You may also be offered the chance for your child to be spoken to by a member of the police to explore the potential risks of sending and receiving this type of sexual imagery.

Further information can be accessed from <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/>



## SCREENS AND SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

A survey of around 5000 students by the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' conference has found that young people are aware of impacts of social media on their well being.

- 57% have received abusive comments online
- 52% feel on the edge of addiction
- 52% say social media makes them feel less confident about how they look or how interesting their life is
- 60% believe their friends show a fake version of themselves online but 85% believe they do not do so themselves
- 63% wouldn't mind if social media hadn't been invented

Perhaps as parents, we need to think about whether family digital detoxes where we all switch off from our screens and social media could have benefit for the whole family. Getting outside, exercising, or taking part in other family activities are alternatives to spending all our times on screens.

More information from <http://www.hmc.org.uk/blog/young-people-rebelling-social-media-survey-reveals/>



<http://www.askaboutgames.com>



<https://parentzone.org.uk/projects/digital-parenting-magazine>



<https://parentzone.org.uk>



<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>



<https://www.bbc.com/ownit>