

The Facts

- No matter how loving and open your family is, sometimes it is hard for a teenager to talk to either parent or carer if they have a problem.
- **One way round this is a “question box” where they can write down what is worrying them. This even works with an only child.**
- Young people really do think that there are no consequences, but the good news is that many are becoming more careful about what they send over the internet.
- **There is always help available. Your teenager’s school may be able to help and there is always CEOP.**
- You don’t need to make this a lecture. Have a discussion. Ask them what behaviours they know about.
- **You can make the e-safety talks fun.**
- Understand that as they grow, their needs will grow too. The only constant is your expectation that they should **behave responsibly online.**
- **Together, we can make everyone in East Sussex E-Safe.**

Further information

You may find these sites useful.

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety. (UKCCIS)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/ukccis/>

Microsoft Windows Parental Controls

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-GB/windows-vista/Kids-online-A-parents-guide-to-monitoring-computer-use>

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection website (CEOP)

<http://www.ceop.gov.uk/>

The Byron Report (An investigation into online safety for children and young people by Dr Tanya Byron)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/>

Parent’s centre (A government resource for parents who want to know more about e-safety.)

<http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/usingcomputersandtheinternet/>

E-Safety at home

Having an e-Safety discussion at home (With teenagers)

Why talk about e-safety at home?

Because as children grow, so does their confidence and the uses they put the technology to change. They also seem to acquire a belief that they know best and that they are in total control of the situation.

So, what do I need to discuss?

No list can be exhaustive and new behaviours appear constantly, but a good start would be....

Sending & receiving images.

Some young people love sending photographs. Sometimes, these photographs may be sexual in nature. You need them to understand that possessing photographs that are in any way sexual of a person under the age of 16 is illegal. They also need to understand that once they send an image they have no further control over it. **Once it is out there, it is out there.** Another security behaviour they can adopt is to only send minimal resolution pictures of themselves...that way, they cannot be "altered" in any way.

Illegal downloading of music and movies.

The first response from teenagers is "Everyone does it". Maybe so, but the music industry is getting wiser to this behaviour now, and taking action when it is discovered. If the young person is using your internet connection to do it, you may be liable. Nowadays, mobile phones are internet compatible and they could be engaging in this behaviour using their phone.

"Sexting" is a where a couple send each other explicit texts or photographs. Again, if either of the people concerned is under the age of 16 it could constitute a criminal offence. Once again, there is the risk, no matter how small, that the "conversation" could become public. Boyfriends and girlfriends can and do fall out, and when they do, recriminations are possible.

Cyberbullying is where hurtful or threatening messages are sent or received. Unfortunately, the media has covered several sad stories recently where some recipients of cyberbullying have found it so intolerable that they have committed suicide. The important thing to remember here is that it is not necessarily the content of the message, it is how it is perceived and received. What one young person might consider mild may be deeply hurtful to someone else, particularly if it is sustained over a period of time. Threatening behaviour is also illegal.

You talk about illegality a lot. People usually make complaints to schools don't they? In the majority of cases, yes. However, the point is that they are not obliged to, and there are now direct reporting buttons that allow people to report an activity directly to CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection). In fact, more and more people are encouraged to use these automatic reporting facilities. The police take these reports seriously and they are determined to send out an unambiguous

message that cyber-abuse will not be tolerated.

Webcams. These are worth a mention, particularly if they are sited in a bedroom. Most webcams come with a little tell-tale lamp that shows when they are working, however, these have been known to fail. The last thing young people need is a webcam switched on that they do not know about.

This sounds like a really difficult conversation to have. You don't have to have it in one go, neither do you need to do it as a "formal" family meeting. (Although some people have done this with excellent results) What you are doing here is:-

- i) Letting everyone in your family know that YOU know the behaviours and activities that are out there.
- ii) Letting everyone know what is and is not allowed.
- iii) Letting everyone know that there are risks associated with some online behaviours....
- iv) ...and as it is YOUR internet connection in use in the home, it is perfectly reasonable for you to say what is and is not allowed over it.

But the main point is... You need to find a way for your young people to tell you if they have done something silly, or that something unpleasant is happening to them. This is harder than you may think.