



Methodist Church Social Media Guidance for..

PARENTS



Overview

The Methodist Church recognises that the internet is becoming an integral part of children and young people's lives. The use of the internet opens up fantastic educational social opportunities and experiences. There are numerous ways in which children and young people can access the internet, through the use of school and home computers, games consoles and mobile phones. As the internet and other forms of social media open up a whole new world of learning, opportunity and experiences its use also opens up some risks.

In accordance with the Methodist Church Safeguarding policy we are committed to protecting and safeguarding children and young people from harm. Details of this Policy can be found on the Methodist website: www.methodist.org.uk (Church Life). We have developed these guidelines for parents to inform you about safe use of social media and to minimise the risk to children and young people. We have also produced a policy and guidance document for youth workers and have guidance specifically aimed at children 5-11years and for young people 11years and over. All these documents can be accessed at www.childrenandyouth.org.uk. (The Well). Social Media Guidance. We strongly recommend that you read through with your son/daughter the relevant guidance.

As you strive to protect your child in the real world we also want you to be able to protect them online. Like learning to cross the road, online safety skills are for life. If your son/daughter understands the risks it will help them to make informed choices aiding them to stay safe whilst getting the most from social media.

Within these guidelines we frequently make reference to a really helpful and informative web site called www.thinkuknow.co.uk which is run by CEOP (child exploitation and online protection centre.) This is a Government law enforcement agency aiming to protect people from abuse. We highly recommend that you have a good look at this site. It has detailed guidance for parents, teachers, youth workers, children and young people. It provides up to date information on social media and has short films and games to stimulate thought and discussion about safe use of social media.

We recognise that for some parents the use of social media can seem a bit daunting and you may feel that your child knows more than you do. However we would encourage you to learn as much as you can, show an interest in your son/daughter and what they are doing, ask them to teach you what they know.

For more information on different types of social media read the parents page at www.thinkuknow.co.uk They explain what gaming, mobiles and social networking is, the risks and how to minimise them. They also explain grooming and why abusers use the internet to target children and young people.

What follows is a list of top tips, key things that we think you should be doing. It's followed by some potential issues and boundaries for you to consider and concludes with a list of professional organisations that you might find helpful...

Top tips for... **PARENTS**



Become social media literate. Engage with your son/daughter find out what they are using and how. Encourage them to show you what they know



As soon as your son/daughter starts to use social media technologies start to talk to them about safety



Install computer internet filtering software which has a kitemark. Filtering products with a kitemark have been independently tested. The kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home Office and Ofcom.



Find out your son/daughter's online habits, who do they talk to what sites do they go to etc



Use parental controls and explain to your son/daughter why these are important.



There are age classifications to some social networking sites. Find out what sites your son/daughter use and if they are age appropriate. For example facebook is only appropriate for 13 years and over



Ensure that your son/daughter knows and understands what sort of information is private and why it should be kept private. For example their postal or email address, home telephone or mobile numbers, what school they go to, places where they like to hang out and spend their time. This applies to social medial networking sites and when using games consoles. Explain that people may not always be who they say they are and people with bad intentions can use the internet and other social media sources to get in touch with children and young people. When using social medial networking sites ensure your son/daughter has appropriate privacy settings set up. Watch a short film on www.thinkuknow.co.uk called, "consequences" which is about a young man who found out all sorts of information about a young woman. This short film is worth watching and demonstrates the importance of privacy settings. Watch this with your son/daughter and discuss.

Ensure your son/daughter knows not to meet up with anyone they have met online. Even if they have been chatting to this person for a while they may think they know them but they don't - they are still a stranger. If they think they are going to meet up with someone they have met online encourage them to tell you or an adult they trust.



Does your son/daughter understand what spam, junk mail or texts are? Inform them never to open, believe or reply. Explain why i.e. they may get a virus on their computer or see an inappropriate image or film.



Remind them that the internet is a public space. This is easy to forget when you're typing away from the privacy of your bedroom. When sending messages and uploading pictures ask them to consider if they would feel happy for you to see or know this information? If the answer is no then maybe they shouldn't post it.



Photos that have been uploaded can be forwarded, changed and shared with a lot of people, there is no getting them back. Encourage them to think about the sort of photos they upload



Explain that they may see things on the internet that may upset or distress them. Encourage them to talk to yourself or an adult they trust if they see such things





Top tips continued...

Encourage your son/daughter to tell yourself or an adult they trust about any online communications that make them feel uncomfortable or scared 

Make sure you and your son/daughter know how to save messages and images just in case they receive anything offensive/ threatening or unsuitable. They may be needed as evidence if reporting incidents 

Always try to keep communication open, have regular conversations about what they like doing and how they are spending their time online. Encourage them to always tell an adult if something happens that they don't like or are worried about. Encourage them to speak out even if they think you will be angry with them 

At www.thinkuknow.co.uk there is information on how to set up help buttons on your computer so that if your son/daughter is scared or worried about anything online they can immediately, press the button and get help from an adult at CEOP (child exploitation and online protection centre.) There are separate help buttons for use by children and young people. The children's help button is called 'Hector's World Safety.' For young people you require the CEOP help button www.ceop.police.uk/Browser-Safety 

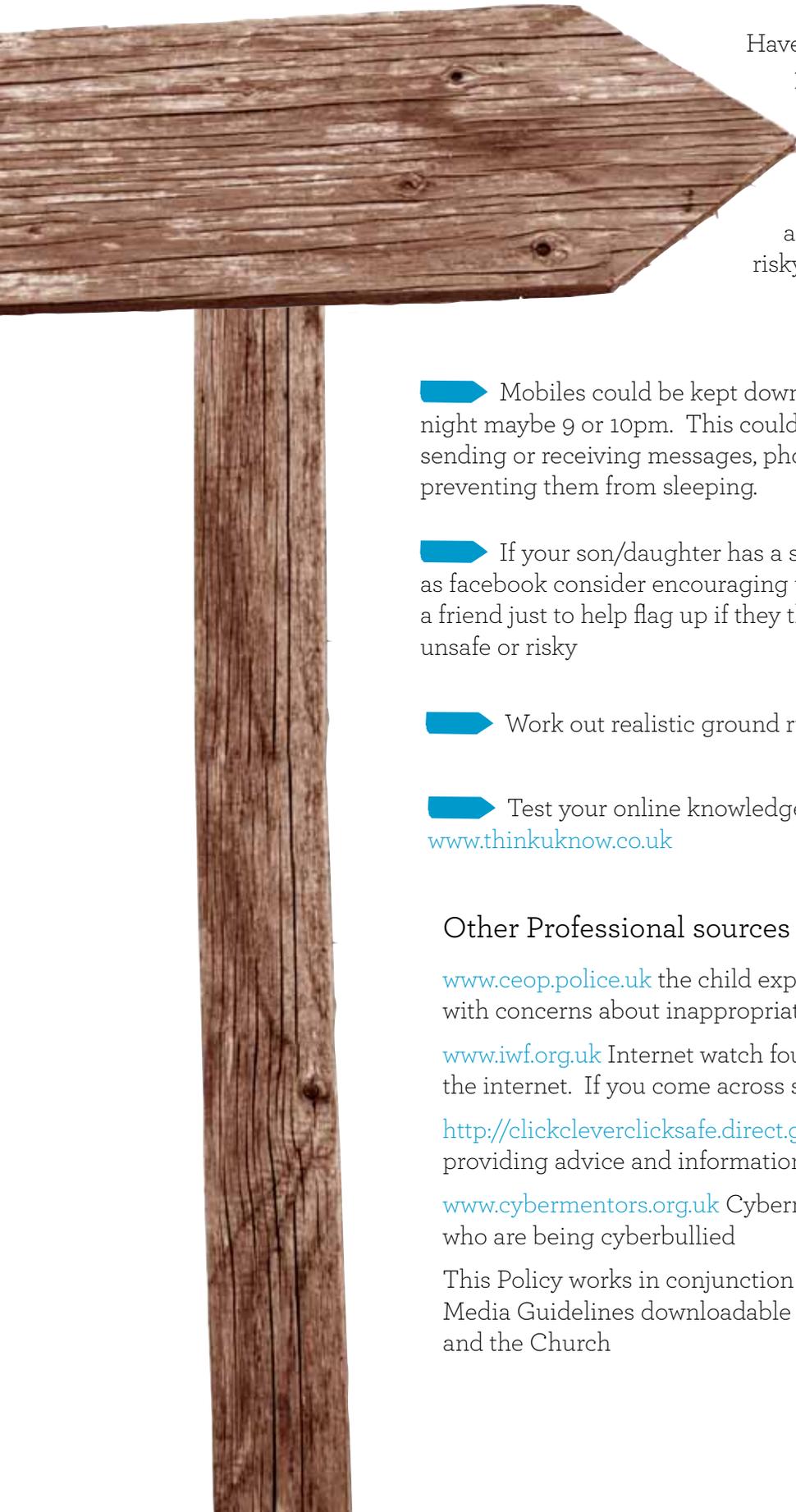
Check out the website www.thinkuknow.co.uk which is a brilliant website with extensive guidance for parents, teachers, young people and children. If your son/daughter is 14 years or over watch a short film called, 'Exposed' about a young woman called Dee and what happened when she sent a photo of herself to her boyfriend. Discuss what happens in this short film... 

Read these guidelines through with your child and /or the guidelines, for young people. Discuss together and make sure you both understand the points being raised 

The Methodist Church has a policy and guidance document for children and youth workers. Within it makes suggestions about appropriate communications with children and young people. Make sure you know how and when adults are in communication with your son/daughter. Are you happy with the method of communication? This could apply to the piano teacher, football club or church leader 

If you have serious online concerns for the welfare of your son/daughter report it by going directly to CEOP using the report button on our website: www.childrenandyouth.org.uk 

As a parent you will undoubtedly have to manage the use of social media within the home and establish boundaries. We have listed below a few points that may help you think through some of the possible issues...



Have computers and games consoles in public spaces in the house rather than in bedrooms. This may help you to keep a track of what's happening online. It may help your son /daughter to stay more accountable and not be tempted into risky behaviour.

➤ Mobiles could be kept downstairs after an agreed time of night maybe 9 or 10pm. This could prevent your son/daughter sending or receiving messages, phone calls or texting at night preventing them from sleeping.

➤ If your son/daughter has a social networking account such as facebook consider encouraging them to have a trusted adult as a friend just to help flag up if they think they are doing anything unsafe or risky

➤ Work out realistic ground rules with your son/daughter

➤ Test your online knowledge by doing a quiz for parents at www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Other Professional sources of help

www.ceop.police.uk the child exploitation online protection centre deals with concerns about inappropriate contacts between children and adults.

www.iwf.org.uk Internet watch foundation removes illegal material from the internet. If you come across such material you can report it to IWF

<http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk> This is a government run site providing advice and information to parents and children

www.cybermentors.org.uk Cybermentors offer support to young people who are being cyberbullied

This Policy works in conjunction with the Methodist Church Social Media Guidelines downloadable from: www.methodist.org.uk Technology and the Church