

Protecting children from sexual abuse

# The Internet and children... What's the problem?

FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 1000 900

**stop it** UK & Ireland  
**now!**  
Together we can prevent **child sexual abuse**

# The Internet and children...

## What's the problem?

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is a campaign that aims to stop child sexual abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children effectively.

Stop it Now! believes that child sexual abuse is a preventable public health problem and challenges adults to create a society that no longer tolerates such abuse.

**“I tried very hard to resist the abuse. I was told it was normal. I felt bad, dirty and awful. A couple of clicks of his camera changed my life completely. The pictures meant that the abuse went on and on.”**

A woman who had been abused in childhood by someone who had taken sexually abusive images of her.

**“My life has fallen apart. I feel utterly ashamed of myself and I don’t know if I can face the world again. I don’t know if my wife and children will ever forgive me for this.”**

A caller to the Helpline who had recently been arrested for child pornography offences.

**“Although I didn’t want to look at the images of the children, I felt pushed into it by my mates. So I downloaded and saved them but never looked at them again.”**

15-year-old boy. An examination of his computer verified that he had not looked at the images once he had saved them.

## Introduction

The Internet and mobile phones have become part of our every day social and working lives and the majority of families now have at least one computer in their home. Although these advances in technology offer a wealth of new experiences, we also need to be aware that they can be used inappropriately by men, women and young people. Some inappropriate use can cause sexual harm to our children.

This leaflet will help you understand where the risks lie and give useful tips on how to help children remain safe whilst on the 'net'. At the back you will find a list of useful resources and an Internet jargon buster which explains what the different terms used to describe various aspects of technology actually mean.

“I couldn't wait to get back from school, switch on my computer and get chatting with him. I can't believe he'd hurt other girls. I felt I could trust him with my life.”

A teenage girl groomed on the Internet.

## What do we mean by ‘technology’?

When we talk about ‘technology’ we are referring to computers, digital cameras, mobile phones, including smart phones and other electronic devices. Almost all mobile phones are capable of accessing the Internet, including social networking sites and chatrooms, and capturing and storing images and videos. These are often referred to as 3G phones. Many popular games consoles also allow users to connect to the Internet.

“When the policeman came to our house and talked to me I didn’t tell him a thing to begin with. He told me that he knew I had been ‘chatting’ with this bloke and knew what we had talked about. All I could think about was what my mum would say to me if she ever discovered what I had been saying.”

15-year-old girl groomed via a chatroom.

## Why do we need to know about technology and how it can be used to sexually harm children?

Over the years we have come to understand the true extent of child sexual abuse and the impact that it has both on child victims and on the wider family. We know that children are most likely to be abused by someone they know and we know that they are not likely to tell anyone at the time, if ever. We also know that the harm sexual abuse causes can impact on them for the rest of their lives. The sooner abuse is identified, the sooner the healing process can begin for all concerned.

On an almost daily basis we read and hear in the media about how technology can be misused, including by those intent on sexually harming children and young people. We are also learning how children and young people may place themselves at risk and be vulnerable to abuse. When communicating via the Internet and mobile phones, young people tend to become less wary and talk about things far more openly than they might when talking to someone face-to-face.

Young people may not always follow 'Keep Safe on the Internet' advice. By the very nature of their age and development, they tend to be adventurous and prepared to take risks. They are often fearful or embarrassed about what they have said to other people whilst communicating online and don't want their parents, carers, other important adults in their lives or even their friends to find out.

Also, if they have been the victims of online grooming or child pornography, they often have a sense of shame and feel responsible and guilty for what has happened which makes it very difficult for them to tell anyone about it. It is important to give our children a clear message that it's OK to tell, even if they feel they have done something wrong.

It is important that all adults are aware of the potential dangers to children and young people and are able to protect them from harm. This means knowing the warning signs in children and adults, both online and offline, and knowing where to get help if you spot something that doesn't seem right.

## How do people use technology to sexually abuse and exploit children?

Male and female adults as well as some young people may use technology to harm children. Some do this by looking at, taking and/or distributing photographs and video images on the Internet of children naked, in sexual poses and/or being sexually abused – this is called child pornography or child sexual abuse imagery.

### ➔ **Looking at photographs and video images on the Internet of children naked, in sexual poses and/or being sexually abused.**

Although this material and the sites that host it are illegal, people are still able to gain access to them and some will actively seek them out. Some people will say they came across the images by accident, but this is rarely the case. Over time, some will feel they have become addicted to viewing such material and find that they are sexually aroused by it. This may lead to them developing a compulsion or need to view more images.

### ➔ **Share images with others using the Internet.**

Some people send abusive images to others who have a sexual interest in children. This file sharing can be between people who do not know each other and has a global reach (people can be anywhere in the world).

Not everyone who has looked at child abuse images will go on to distribute them to others or to sexually abuse a child directly, in fact, most do not. But becoming reliant on child pornography can diminish a person's ability to sustain healthy adult relationships and can increase their motivation to seek sexual contact with a child. Such people may feel anxious and concerned about their own thoughts and feelings and may need help to prevent themselves from harming a child.

### ➔ **Taking photographs, videos and DVDs of children naked, in sexual poses or being sexually abused.**

These are most often taken with a digital camera or mobile phone. Many hand held devices can take photographs, make videos and connect directly to the Internet, making the sharing of such material even easier. Images may also be shown to children and young people by someone who is intent on sexually abusing them and wants to 'normalise' the activity in the eyes of the child.

## Impact

Victims of child pornography often feel guilty for what has happened, are anxious about who will see the pictures and have to live with the fear that their pictures will be on the Internet forever.

“People who look at abusive images of children are no different from those who sexually abuse them and photograph the abuse. They might just as well have been standing in the room when the abuse happened.”

Male victim of sexually abusive image production.

## Other ways in which technology may be used to sexually harm children are:

### Online grooming

Communicating and forming a 'friendship' with children online with the intent of arranging to meet them in the 'real world' to sexually abuse them is known as 'grooming'. The abuser will find out information about their potential victim and try to establish the likelihood of the child telling. They try to find out as much as they can about the child's family and social networks and, if they think it is 'safe enough', will then try to isolate their victim. They may use flattery and promises of gifts, or threats and intimidation in order to achieve some control.

Chatrooms and social networking sites are common places for such behaviour to start. Children may be encouraged to give personal details, to go off into a private chatroom or use a webcam.

'Groomers' sometimes pretend to be younger than they are and may change their gender, give a false physical description of themselves and send pictures of other people, pretending that it is them. But mostly they don't pretend at all, and children still agree to talk, and sometimes to meet.

### Encouraging children to hold sexual conversations, perhaps leading to pressure to engage in, and talk about, sexual behaviour

This is sometimes referred to as cybersex. Again, an abuser looking for young people to engage in this sort of behaviour is likely to look in teen chatrooms or social networking sites. Such behaviour takes place online, without physical contact between the abuser and child. Despite the lack of physical contact, children can be frightened and harmed by what has happened and may find it difficult to talk about.

"It wasn't the physical things that he did, but what he did to my head that ruined my life."

Female victim of grooming online.

“She was great. I felt I could talk with her about anything. It felt like she was my best friend. When I met her, ‘she’ turned out to be ‘he’ and was much older than me. He frightened and hurt me.”

13-year-old boy who met his chatroom friend offline.

### How is the grooming of children different online?

In many circumstances, grooming online is faster and anonymous and results in children trusting an online ‘friend’ much more quickly than someone they had just met face-to-face. Those intent on sexually harming children can easily access information about them whilst hiding their own true identity, age and

gender. People who groom children online are not as restricted by time or accessibility to a child as they would be in the ‘real world’.

“I met him through a chatroom. He said he ran a model agency and needed more models. He got me to send pictures of myself and told me I was beautiful. It all happened so quickly. I was really excited. It felt like I’d known him for ages and we fixed to meet up. I’m just so glad I took my friend with me because it turned out that he wasn’t who he said he was – he yelled at me for bringing my friend and then just left us.”

14 year old groomed through a chatroom.

## Social networking

Social networking websites allow users to connect and communicate with others. People use social networking to keep in touch with friends, family, colleagues and to meet new people they haven't met in the real world. You've probably heard of some of them; [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) are a couple of examples. Others, for younger children, include habbo hotel ([www.habbo.com](http://www.habbo.com)) and Club Penguin ([www.clubpenguin.com](http://www.clubpenguin.com))

You may also have heard about them in the news – either in connection with child abusers making contact with young people or young people themselves using the sites to bully and target others. However, young people can protect themselves and behave responsibly when using social networking sites – if they learn how to.

While each site is a little different, they have similar characteristics and allow users to do similar things, such as; create a personal profile, set privacy settings, make friends, send messages, post pictures or write a 'blog'.

### Top tips:

- ➔ If your child wants to use a social networking site, create their profile with them. You could ask them to show you how it's done.
- ➔ Help them set their privacy settings so that their information is as protected as possible. Help them understand why it is important to keep personal information private and restricted to people they know and trust.
- ➔ Keep an eye on who their 'friends' are and take an interest in who they are talking to.
- ➔ Talk to your child about receiving messages from people they do not know – or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or distressed. Let them know that it is ok for them to show you these, that you will not be cross and that you will be able to help them.
- ➔ You should also set rules about posting pictures – whether your child is allowed to do this or not.

Check online at [www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk) for resources to help you get important safety messages across.

## Sexting

'Sexting' generally refers to the sending of sexually explicit images via text, email, MSN or through social networking sites. For example, this could be a picture of a young person exposing themselves or in a state of undress.

There could be many reasons why young people would want to take these sorts of pictures of themselves and send them to someone else. It could be that two young people who are in a relationship want to prove their love or commitment to each other; it could be that someone is looking to start a relationship with someone else or it could be that they find it exciting or want to show off.

Sexual images of people under 18 are classed as 'child pornography' and are illegal to have or to distribute. While 'sexting' may be seen as acceptable or fun to young people, it is important that both we and they know that it could result in immediate consequences within the school environment or more serious ones with the police.

### Top tips:

- ➔ Talk to your children about sexting and the consequences - don't wait for something to happen.
- ➔ Remind your children that once an image is sent, there is no getting it back.
- ➔ Stress to your child that once they have sent an image, or posted it online, they no longer have control of it, it could end up anywhere and anyone could see it.
- ➔ Make sure they take responsibility. Help them understand that they are responsible for their actions. That includes what they choose to do if they receive a sexually explicit photo. Have them understand that if they do receive one, they should talk to a trusted adult. Tell them that if they do send it on, they may be distributing child pornography – and could get in trouble with the police.

## How can we spot problems that may be happening online?

It is difficult for children to talk about sexual concerns or sexual abuse, whether committed by a man, woman or another child. Many tell no one at the time and, even as adults, many victims do not tell anyone.

We have learnt that both adults and children are less cautious when communicating online and tend to take more risks. This seems to add another barrier to children feeling able to let someone know about concerning friendships online as they are too embarrassed to talk about it.

### **Signs that a child or young person may be the target of sexual abuse online include:**

- ➔ Spending increasing amounts of time on the Internet.
- ➔ Becoming increasingly secretive – particularly around their use of technology.
- ➔ Shutting the door and hiding what they have on screen when someone enters the room.
- ➔ Not being able to talk openly about their activity online.
- ➔ Agitated behaviour when answering their mobile and needing to take the call in private.
- ➔ Developing a pattern of leaving the family home for periods of time with no explanation about where they are going.
- ➔ Vague talk of a new friend but offering no further information.
- ➔ Spending increasing amounts of time talking secretly with a new online friend.

**Other signs that something may be wrong:**

- ➔ Not wanting to be alone with a particular adult or young person.
- ➔ Sudden, unexplained personality changes and mood swings.
- ➔ Outbursts of anger and irritation.
- ➔ Self harm.

Some of these behaviours may be part of growing up or caused by other factors in a child's life. If you are worried, talk to someone you trust or ring the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900.

## How can we keep our children safe when they are using technology?

Children and young people use computers from an early age at home and in school. For some, their knowledge and understanding of how it works may be greater than that of their parents and carers. This can sometimes leave us feeling unsure of how to monitor our children's safe use of technology.

**“When my daughter told me she'd been using her blog on the Internet I hadn't got a clue what she was talking about. It was a wake up call for me. I realised that I needed to learn far more about young people's behaviour online.”**

Mother of a 14-year-old girl.

When our children are young, we have more control over their activities but as they grow into adolescence, with their need for privacy and freedom, this control lessens.

It can be difficult to allow our children more independence as they grow up whilst minimising the risks that worry us. It is important that we understand enough about technology to keep our children safe from harm and enable them to use it positively and responsibly. Children need to be just as aware of the dangers online as they are of those in their home, school or social settings.

**“I didn't even know how to turn the computer on let alone how I could protect my son. He's now been convicted for looking at child pornography and will carry the label of sex offender for the rest of his life. I feel so responsible for all this.”**

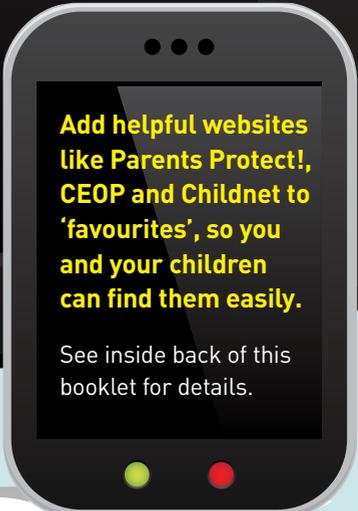
Mother of a 14-year-old boy.

## Top tips to help keep your children safe

- 1** When buying a computer, mobile phone, gaming device or any new technological item, ask a sales assistant which Internet safety devices are available to help manage your child's Internet access. Install software that can filter inappropriate material and allows you to monitor what they are doing online.
- 2** When your children are young, place the computer where you can always see the screen. By doing this, you will help them develop a pattern of safe use of the Internet which may help them when they get older and want more privacy online.
- 3** Help your children to enjoy their time on the Internet but also encourage offline activity, for example – playing with their friends, participating in family activities and developing hobbies.
- 4** Teach them not to give out personal information about themselves such as their name, address, telephone number, where they live or which school they go to. If they're signing up for email, chat or on a website, get them to use a nickname and make sure that it's one that does not identify their year/ date of birth or have sexual connotations.
- 5** Teach them not to give out personal information about their family or friends.

## online:

- 6 Talk to them about the need to be careful of 'friends' online because they might not be who they say they are.
- 7 Be open – take an interest in their online world just as you could in the offline one. Talk to them about what they've seen or sites they have visited, just as you might talk to them about a book they've read or a film they've seen.
- 8 Educate your children to use the Internet wisely and to become critical users, encourage them to question whether the information they are receiving from people is true.
- 9 Let them know that they can tell you if they become uncomfortable with anything that happens on the Internet and acknowledge that it may be difficult for them to do this. They may have said things they are embarrassed about and wouldn't want you to know. Help them learn that we all make mistakes when growing up and that you can help.
- 10 Ensure your children understand the danger of meeting up with someone they have only met online whether that person says they are a man, woman or child and that they should never go on their own.



**Add helpful websites like Parents Protect!, CEOP and Childnet to 'favourites', so you and your children can find them easily.**

See inside back of this booklet for details.

## Teach your children the SMART rules

Teach your children the five key Childnet SMART rules which remind young people to be SMART online. You should go through these tips with your children.

### Safe

Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information – such as your name, email, phone number, home address, or school name – to people who you don't know online.

### Meeting

Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents'/carers' permissions and when they can be present.

### Accepting

Accepting e-mails, IM messages or opening files from people you don't know or trust can be dangerous – they may contain viruses or nasty messages.

### Reliable

Someone online may be lying about who they are, and information you find on the Internet may not be reliable.

### Tell

Your parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

*SMART Rules for Adults to Share with Children and SMART Rules for Parents and Carers are available as useful handout cards.*

See inside back of this booklet for details



## How can we recognise that someone may be using technology inappropriately or to harm children?

“I wish I’d questioned him earlier when I felt uneasy about his behaviour on the Internet. I can’t get over the fact that he was looking at pictures of children being sexually abused. How could he do such a thing?”

Wife of a man who downloaded abusive images from the Internet.

It is important that we are able to recognise the warning signs that someone we know may be using technology inappropriately and to assist them in seeking help – this includes our children.

### **There may be cause for concern about the behaviour of someone if they:**

- ➔ Start to spend increasing amounts of time on the Internet and become preoccupied with it.
- ➔ Need to be online so frequently that it starts to impact on their family/school/college/work life.
- ➔ Become emotionally distant and less available.
- ➔ Withdraw from usual family and social activities.
- ➔ Become secretive about their online activity, shutting the door of the room where they are using the computer and changing the screen if someone enters the room.
- ➔ Regularly make plausible excuses for needing to be online.
- ➔ Increase their viewing of adult pornography.
- ➔ Regularly use the Internet late at night.
- ➔ Make promises not to go online so frequently, then break them.
- ➔ Change their sexual behaviour.
- ➔ Hide traces of their online activity and storage of files.
- ➔ Use the technology with children whilst excluding other adults.
- ➔ Meet up with children, young people and/or adults in real life who they have initially met online.

All of these behaviours may have legitimate explanations and be caused by other factors in a person's life or they may be inappropriate for other reasons. If you are worried, talk to someone you trust or call the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900 or email [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk).

## **What to do if you have concerns about someone's behaviour online**

If we are worried that someone is using the Internet in a way that may be harmful to children, we need to take action. It is very disturbing to suspect someone we know may be looking at abusive images of children and/or sexually abusing a child, especially if the person is a friend or member of our family. We want to dismiss such thoughts and put them down to imagination. But it is better to talk over the situation with someone than to discover later that we were right to be worried.

**“I'm blaming myself for not being stronger. I knew in my guts that something wasn't right. He was spending more and more time late in the evening on the Internet. I asked him what he was doing and he said he was looking for information for a project he was leading up at work. I got fed up and just started going to bed on my own. If only I'd pursued my worries, perhaps things would have turned out differently.”**

Wife of a man arrested for grooming young people through chatrooms.

Thousands of people every year discover that a family member or friend has been affected by child sexual abuse. Children who are abused and their families need help to recover from their experiences and people who are sexually harmful to children need help to stop such behaviour. This is a difficult process for all involved, but support is available for both victims and offenders and it may be the best way to prevent further harm.

**“He seemed such a nice bloke – and was popular amongst the staff. It’s difficult to take on board that he’s been arrested for looking at child pornography...What made him want to do it? After all, he’s got a lovely wife and daughter.”**

Female colleague of a man arrested for downloading/making abusive images of children.

Experience tells us that men, women and young people who are using technology inappropriately often want to stop. Taking action can lead to abuse being prevented and children being protected. It can also lead to the abuser getting effective treatment to stop the abusive behaviour and to become a safer member of our community.

Many people who phone our Helpline do so because they are concerned about the online behaviour of someone they know or are concerned about their own online behaviour.

**Take this step now – contact us for help.**

**FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 1000 900**

**EMAIL: [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk)**

## Where to go for advice or help about protecting children online

### To report concerns about a child or young person's safety online

#### ➔ **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**

The Centre provides a single point of contact for the public, law enforcers and the communications industry to report targeting of children online and offers advice and information to parents and potential victims of abuse 24 hours a day. The site also allows Internet users to make reports about suspicious online behaviour to law enforcement agencies.

[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

### To seek confidential advice regarding harmful sexual behaviour online

#### ➔ **Stop it Now! Helpline**

A Helpline which gives advice to adults concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards children.

**Call 0808 1000 900**

**Email [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk)**

[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

#### ➔ **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)**

A charity established to combat child abuse images online, it provides an anonymous mechanism for the public to report suspected illegal content.

[www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

## To find safety information

### ➔ **Parents Protect!**

This site contains a wealth of information about protecting children from sexual abuse, including online abuse.

[www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk)

### ➔ **Childnet International**

A non-profit organisation working with others to “help make the Internet a great and safe place for children”. Its website gives news and background to Childnet’s work and serves as a portal to Childnet’s award-winning projects.

[www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org)

### ➔ **UK Safer Internet Centre**

This site contains advice on how to use the Internet and new technologies safely and responsibly as well as a range of practical resources, news and events focussing on the safe and responsible use of the Internet and new technologies.

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)



## Internet jargon buster

### Address (URL)

An address, or website address is what you type in to find places on the Internet. They begin with www (world wide web), followed by the name of the organisation or company. For example, Parents Protect! is: www.parentsprotect.co.uk. An email address is different, because it is used to contact an individual. Email addresses always include the symbol @ (pronounced 'at'). A fictional address might look like this: joeblogs@parliament.uk. Read aloud, this would sound like 'Joe Bloggs at Parliament dot UK'.

### Administrator

A user with sufficient access rights to allow them to manage the access rights of other users and carry out other high-level computer management tasks.

### Attachment

This is a file of information that can be sent as part of (attached to) an email. It may contain text, photos, graphics, sound or video.

### Authentication

The process for verifying that someone or something is who or what it claims to be. In private and public computer networks (including the Internet), authentication is generally done with passwords.

### Avatar

A picture or cartoon of yourself or a favourite character that is used to represent yourself in games or chat forums on the web.

### Blog

A 'blog' is short for Web log or online journal. Some websites are particularly appealing to young people because they make it extremely easy for them to create blogs, multimedia profiles and other Web content. (See Social Networking, page 9)

## Broadband

Broadband connections to the Internet differ from dial-up connections in two ways. First, they are much faster and permanently connected; second, they allow you to make telephone calls whilst you're surfing the Internet. Examples of broadband connections include ADSL, cable modem and fibre-optic leased lines.



## Browser

A program that lets users read and navigate pages on the World Wide Web, such as Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Internet Explorer.

## Chat rooms

An online discussion group where you can chat (by typing) with other users in real time.

## Cookie

A small data file that is stored on a user's local computer for record-keeping purposes and which contains information about the user that is applicable to a website, such as user preferences.

## Download

To transfer a copy of a file from a remote computer to a requesting computer by means of a modem or network.

## Email filter

Software that scans incoming email for spam or other unwanted material and filters it accordingly.

## Emoticon

Faces made up of text e.g. winking ;- ) or smiling :- ) can be used to say "don't take that last comment seriously".

## Favourites

A place on your Internet browser to store web addresses that you use often, or don't want to forget.

### **File sharing**

Making files available over the Internet to other users, typically music or video files.

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### **Filter**

A program designed to monitor what is being loaded into a Web browser or email program and blocks certain types of material.

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### **Firewall**

Hardware or software designed to prevent unauthorised access to a computer or network over the Internet.

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### **Grooming**

Grooming is a word used to describe how people who want to sexually harm children and young people get close to them, and often their families, and gain their trust. Grooming occurs online by people forming relationships with children and pretending to be their friend. Such grooming activity may result in meeting a child with the intention of committing a sexual offence.

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### **History**

The list your web browser has of addresses of the websites you have visited.

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### **Icon**

A small picture or image, often self-explanatory, which makes something happen when you click on it. For example, clicking on a printer icon will print the page you have on your computer screen.

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### **Instant Messaging (IM)**

Sending short text messages in real time over the Internet.

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### **Internet Service Provider (ISP)**

A company providing a connection to the Internet and other related services.

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### **MMS**

Stands for multi-media messages service. This means sending messages between mobile phones or between mobile phones and computer email. These can be text messages, still images, short films or audio clips.

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### Modem

A modem is part of your computer that lets it communicate with others through telephone lines. Some modems are built into computers and some are added on as external devices.

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### MP3

MPEG-1 Audio Layer-3 is a standard for compressing and storing sound files, typically for music.

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### Peer-to-peer (P2P)

A network in which each computer is capable of being both a server and a client; typically used to share music files over the Internet.

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### Picture Messaging

Many new mobile phones are fitted with digital still or video cameras. You can take pictures with these and send them via the mobile networks to other mobile devices with the same technology or to email addresses via the Internet.

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### Profile

Some chat rooms and social networking sites let users complete a personal profile which others can see. Children and teenagers should never include in a profile any information that could identify them, or disclose where they are.

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### Pop-up

A small window that appears over a web page to display an advertisement.

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### Sexting

Children sending (illegal) sexual images of themselves and each other to other's phones.

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### SMS

Stands for Short Messaging Service and means sending text messages by mobile phones.

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### Social networking sites

These are places where people create a personalised page on the web related to their interests and views which links with other users with similar views and develops an online, ever increasing, social network.

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### Spam

Like junk mail through your door, spam is email you haven't asked for and don't want. It can be sexually explicit, which is another reason for children not to give out their email address when they are online.

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### URL

Another term for an Internet, or website address. (It stands for Uniform Resource Locator.)

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### User account

A set of rules defining access to files and systems on a computer that is personal to a given individual.

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### Username

A code name that, with a password, unlocks a user account.

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### WAP

WAP stands for Wireless Application Protocol and is the technology used by most mobile phones to browse Internet sites that are written in a compatible format.

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### Webcams

This term is short for web cameras. They are special video cameras that can be linked to the Internet. Just like ordinary cameras, you point them at something, say a friend or a view of the beach, and the image appears, more or less straightaway on your computer screen. While they are a fantastic piece of technology, they could be used to send or receive unpleasant or illegal images.

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## Text speak

Abbreviating words and the use of acronyms has become common when writing text messages, online messages and emails. Here are some of the most commonly used:

ASL	Age, sex, location
POS	Parent over my shoulder
A?	Pardon
L8R	Later
LOL	Laugh out loud
PIR	Parent in room
NTHNG	Nothing
THANQ	Thank you
OMG	Oh my God!
RUOK	Are you okay?
LMAO	Laugh my ass off
SPK	Speak
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
BTW	By the way
R	Are
EZ	Easy
PMSL	Pee myself laughing
WTF	What the [flip]
KTHNX	OK, thanks



## Action you can take

### Contact the Stop it Now! Helpline Freephone 0808 1000 900.

If you are unsure or worried about your own thoughts or behaviour towards children, or the behaviour of someone you know, whether they are an adult, a young person or a child, our experienced advisors will talk over your worries with you and can offer confidential advice on what steps you could take.

OR

### Contact your local police or children's social services.

The police and children's social services have joint working arrangements for responding to suspected child sexual abuse. Someone will talk to you about your concerns and may ask for details so the situation can be investigated further. Police and children's services teams are very experienced in this work and will deal sensitively with the child and family. Remember, child sexual abuse is a crime and abusers may need to go to court before the abuse stops and they and the child get the help they need.

Our children are our future and all of us have a responsibility to protect them. Take action. Call Stop it Now! for further advice.

**0808 1000 900**

## Resources available from Stop it Now! UK & Ireland



### Preventing child sexual abuse

This booklet introduces the Stop it Now! campaign and describes what Stop it Now! is doing to prevent child sexual abuse. (Ref Stop 01)



### What we all need to know to protect our children

This booklet provides the information we all need in order to recognise the warning signs of abuse in adults we know and to build the confidence to do something about it. (Ref Stop 02)



### Child's play? Preventing abuse among children and young people

This booklet provides the information we all need in order to recognise the warning signs of harmful sexual behaviour in children and to build the confidence to do something about it. (Ref Stop 03)



### The Internet and children – What's the problem?

This booklet provides essential information for parents, carers and professionals in all matters relating to internet safety and how to recognise the danger signs in adult online activity. (Ref Stop 04)



### SMART Rules for Adults to Share with Children

To help a child learn any set of rules it is important to go through them and explain why you want the child to remember them. This useful card details some SMART rules for parents and carers to share with children.



### SMART Rules for Parents and Carers

The best way of protecting children from sexual abuse is for adults to openly talk about prevention. This useful card details some SMART rules for parents and carers to share with each other.



### Parents Protect!

This leaflet details some of the key points made on the Parents Protect! website. It gives advice around what we should all be thinking about and encourages people to find out more. You can also use the front page as a poster - at your workplace, community venue or school.



### The Stop it Now! UK & Ireland Helpline Reports

These reports detail Helpline activity, statistics and call examples.

- ➔ 2005-2009 Helpline Report
- ➔ 2005-2009 Helpline Report Executive Summary
- ➔ 2002-2005 Helpline Report

To request copies of these publications, contact the Stop it Now! Administrator:  
 Telephone: 01527 598 184 Email: [office@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:office@stopitnow.org.uk)  
[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk) [www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk)



Working to Protect Children

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