

A Guide for Parents to potential signs of online manipulation.

This document is intended to support you as a parent to safeguard your child online. This document is for your use and careful consideration should be made as to the best way to use the information contained within it with your child. This will depend on their age and maturity.

The internet is hugely important to them now and in the future. It brings fun, enjoyment, entertainment and education in equal measure. It offers opportunities for viewing, sharing, chatting and making friends. When used well it brings huge benefits.

Unfortunately, however, the internet can also be used to manipulate and groom children. This can happen quickly online. The key prevention steps to take are to share the experience with your child, to focus on educating them about the benefits and risks and to offer appropriate support. We have adopted a stop, check and share approach to keep children safe when they are on the internet.



Stop is intended to slow children down and to make them think about what they are doing. We make most of our mistakes when we rush or when we are complacent.



Check is intended to get children to think about how they are feeling about what they are doing or being asked to do. It is important to get children to think about whether they'd be happy for whatever they post to appear on a billboard in the town centre!



Sharing is about your child talking to you about their concerns or worries. It's about them talking to trusted adults so that early intervention can take place. Support your child and try not to blame them when/if they make a mistake. They need to be able to talk to you.

10 indicators of behaviour

Below we list 10 indicators of behaviour by others that may be a cause for concern if your child comes across it.

Please note one or more of the following may be present. It's also important to recognize that the presence of one or more of these may not indicate an attempt to manipulate.

1 Sharing an interest	<p>Having a shared interest is how most offline friendships begin. The online world is no different. Many online friendships begin in games or chatrooms where there are shared interests.</p> <p>Many people who wish to manipulate children use a “shared” interest to get close to them. They may even research their previous posts to find out what they like.</p> <p>If someone shows an interest in your child through their interests watch out for any of the other signs of manipulation.</p>
2 Moving Platform	<p>Often someone with malicious intent will try to get a child to move from a public/open platform to a private space or channel.</p> <p>Asking them to add them to another network or move to another space may be an attempt to isolate them so that they are able to change the nature of the conversation or activity.</p> <p>This may happen very quickly once an initial connection has been made.</p>

3

Flattery

Flattery is a regular starting point for manipulation.

Flattery is part of gaining the trust and friendship of someone. It is typically combined with other indicators such as too good offers or moving platform

4

Too good to be true offers

Adults are good at spotting offers that sound too good to be true. Children have less experience and will often fall for them.

Such offers may be on a personal level or within a game or activity.

Examples would include a child being told that the person can give them a great opportunity e.g. to become a model, to be a Youtuber. Alternatively, it may be that they have the ability, or possess a cheat to unlock the next level of a game.

These offers may be made based on activity the child needs to perform or a price to be paid. The initial offer is often to draw them in and may not seem too onerous. Equally they may be impossible to fulfil but followed by a riskier alternative one than can.

5

Using a game or challenge to compromise

Truth or dare games or challenges can be used to manipulate children into doing something indiscreet and potentially dangerous. This may then be used to blackmail or threaten them.

This may be linked to a too good to be true offer.

6

Persistence & pressure

Someone seeking to manipulate a child will often be very persistent and often put them under pressure.

Sending multiple messages with no time to respond is a technique used to disorientate users.

Loss of friendship, blackmail and threats are often used following a period of flattery. Changing tone is used to disrupt and confuse. Repeated requests for the same thing is often used.

7

Multiple accounts joining in

In some situations, multiple accounts may join in to create pressure. This may be confusing.

Multiple accounts may represent several people (those seeking to manipulate children may share the details) or may represent one user with multiple accounts giving the impression that a lot of people agree.

This manipulation seeks to make the setting/chat, activity seem normal.

8

Isolating from friends and family

Often those seeking to manipulate children will seek to isolate them from friends or families by driving a wedge.

They may use their likes or interests do this e.g. your mum and dad are cruel not allowing you to have a dog. You can watch videos of my dogs, and I'll share some pictures with you...

This is then used over time to try to get them to keep secrets.

<p>9</p> <p>Threats & Blackmail</p>	<p>Once a child has done something indiscreet it is easier for someone to use this to further manipulate them.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Unpleasant Usernames</p>	<p>Whilst we imagine all abusers of children to hide behind profiles sometimes manipulation may be done in plain sight.</p> <p>Children responding innocently to a comment from someone with an inappropriate username may at a later stage be blackmailed or threatened for having done so.</p>

Please note there are a lot of useful support sites to help parents with more information.

NSPCC Online Safety

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

Childnet

<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers>

CEOP

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/How-can-CEOP-help-me-YP/How-can-CEOP-help-me-parent/>