CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY

Fact sheet: Information for parents and guardians on keeping children and young people safe online

Technology is changing and with these changes more children and young people are spending time online. The Internet has made it easier to stay connected with friends and family, however the Internet can pose great risks. It is important that we all understand how to keep children safe.

Information for parents and guardians

- Keep lines of communication open with your child. Ask about their online experiences and if they are having any issues
- Educate yourself on appropriate privacy and security settings for games, apps and social media platforms your child might be using.
- Recommend to your child that they make their social media accounts private or revise their privacy settings.
- Be familiar with the parental controls that are available on devices. Parental controls can help filter and block harmful and inappropriate content that may appear on games, apps and social media platforms.
- Be alert to signs of distress that exhibit during and after accessing games, apps and social media platforms. Report harmful online content to the eSafety Office **safety.gov.au/report**
- Be aware that the Archdiocese of Sydney will never ask your child for any personal information online.
- Written consent needs to be obtained before your child communicates with an Archdiocesan worker or volunteer online. Refer to the consent form **Engaging in face to face communication with children and young people**
- When your child is communicating online it should be conducted from an appropriate location. Appropriate locations are living rooms, kitchens and home office areas. Inappropriate locations are private places like bedrooms and bathrooms.

- Educate your child about talking to a trusted adult when something does not feel right or makes them uncomfortable online.
- Establish appropriate time limits for when and how long your child can be online. Increased time online can have negative health impacts such as:
  - Tiredness, sleep disturbance, headaches, eye strains
  - Changes in eating patterns
  - Appearing anxious or irritable when away from device
  - Being withdrawn from family and friends
- Educate your child about talking to a trusted adult when something does not feel right or makes them uncomfortable online.
- Be alert to signs of inappropriate contact, cyber abuse and recognise signs that an online *'friend'* may be trying to develop an inappropriate relationship.

What is Cyber Abuse?

Cyber abuse is behaviour that uses technology to threaten, intimidate harass or humiliate someone- with the intent to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically. Many forms of cyber abuse could be considered illegal under state and federal legislation. Under the *Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995* it is an offence to menace, harass or cause offence using a 'carriage service' such as a mobile phone, landline phone, social media and emails. If you or anyone you know is being cyber abused you can report it directly to the Police as well as the eSafety Commissioner **esafety.gov.au/report**

More information

The eSafety Commissioner is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. For further information on staying safe online visit the eSafety Commissioners website at **esafety.gov.au**

Further Resources

Visit the Archdiocese's Safeguarding website to access the Archdiocese's fact sheets:
- *Fact Sheet: Cyberbullying*
- *Fact Sheet: Information for Archdiocesan employees and volunteers (workers) engaging in face to face communication with children and young people*

https://www.sydneycatholic.org/safeguarding-and-child-protection/