The Main Risks for Children and Young People when using the Internet

CONTACT

o Accepting 'friends' who may not be who they say they are. These may, occasionally, be sexual predators, aiming to groom children, sometimes with the intention of meeting them offline. They may also be people using the internet to threaten, intimidate or bully.

o Disclosing personal information i.e. names, ages, addresses, details of schools attended - including identifiable photos, or personal passwords.

CONDUCT

o Children and young people can also be the perpetrators of cyber-bullying or abusive behaviour online Cyberbullying; research[1] suggests that around 60% of children and young people have experienced cyber-bullying

o Prejudice driven abuse and malicious communications e.g. homophobia, hate websites, inciting violent extremism

o Reputational risk: posting inappropriate content online may become public and permanent. Further education institutes, or job providers, are increasingly checking informal information, such as Facebook profiles, when assessing a persons application for work or training

CONTENT

o Exposure to illegal material – child pornography or extreme violence

o Exposure to sexualised material which may cause distress e.g. adult pornography, or material that might promote premature engagement in sexualised behaviour e.g. sexually provocative dress

o Exposure to websites which advocate unhealthy or dangerous behaviour e.g. pro-anorexia, pro-suicide sites

COMMERCIALISATION

o Accepting or sharing files which may contain viruses or spyware – for example, free music file sharing applications. Accepting files that have not been cleaned or authenticated can also lead to others being able to access personal or sensitive information, both of the child and of other people who may use the computer.

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[1] Beatbullying Virtual Violence Report