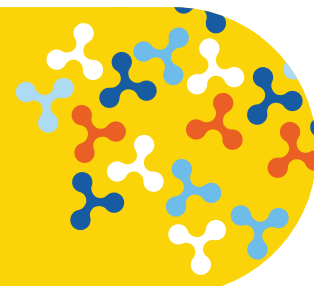


Advice for parents and adults on how to protect children and young people from technology abuse



In a recent public conversation hosted by the National Centre, CEO Dr Leanne Beagley spoke with Detective Inspector Jon Rouse APM on the risks of technology, how it can be used to abuse children and young people and what needs to be done to better protect children and young people from the harm it can cause.

Increased risk today for children and young people

In the 1990s, communication technology involved pagers and fax machines, and child abuse material was reported by photo lab developers or tip-offs from people involved in the distribution of images. Thirty years later, there is **widespread, rapid uptake of mobile and smartphone technology**. With the increased adoption of technology, avenues for distributing child abuse materials and opportunities for grooming have increased. And **parents, carers and other adults have fallen behind the technological curve and are struggling** to supervise children and young people's use of technology with 24 hour a day access and exposure.

[Child sexual exploitation](#) includes a range of behaviours and situations where technology or the internet is used to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child, including producing and sharing child sexual abuse material online. [Sextortion](#) is a form of **online blackmail** where someone tricks a child or young person into sending sexual images or video, then threatens them with sharing the images unless they comply with the offender's demands.

Advice for parents, carers and adults working with children – from Detective Inspector Jon Rouse

- 1. Understand the technology and take an active interest** in the way children use it. Adults need to understand that the device has a wide range of functionality beyond being contactable. Once a child has installed all the applications that their friends are using, sit down with them. Get them to show you what technology they are using, including their fake accounts. Then review their security settings. A lot of platforms have privacy settings that can help protect them from scams.
- 2. Focus on developing a good relationship with the child** where they will tell you when something bad has happened. More than half of the newly produced content is victim-produced. That's a child in the safety of their own home, producing content that is ending up in the hands of law enforcement. Content is no longer only being produced and shared by offenders. While mum and dad are asleep, kids are online in their rooms. So, for parents and carers when bedtime comes, take their phone, tablet or device. They have a good nights' sleep. And in the morning, give it back to them.
- 3. Use the online resources that are available:**
 - [eSafetyparents](#) is an online safety resource page for parents, carers and grandparents, including how to set rules about how devices and gaming are used in your home safely
 - [ACCCE resources](#) to help parents and carers.



- 4. Be the adult.** Being a parent or responsible adult in a child or young person's life includes having sensitive and challenging conversations. If you're not having these difficult conversations about their safety online, other people will be having conversations with them.
- 5. Monitor children and young people's behaviour.** Know them well enough to detect a change in their behaviour and notice it. It could be indicative that something has occurred that they are struggling with and don't know how to manage. There will may be physical manifestations to notice.

The impacts of child sexual exploitation can be long lasting and devastating, it's critical that parents, carers and other adults reach out for help.

"Offenders are very good at grooming. They are very adept at using technology against children. One instance an individual was pretending to be Justin Bieber. He socially engineered 157 child victims globally, who did a range of horrible things to themselves, to siblings, and he would capture those moments and he would use it against them. And they thought they were talking to Justin Bieber, that they would get a backstage pass... Tragically, we are losing children to th[ese] scam[s]. They are actually taking their own lives". -Jon Rouse, APM

See the National Centre's website for the recording of the conversation.

Please help us understand your learning needs by emailing us at practice@nationalcentre.org.au.