An internet we trust
Exploring reliability in the online world

Safer Internet Day 2021 | **UK Safer Internet Centre**

Handling sensitive topics and disclosures

While discussing how they use the internet, it is possible that children and young people may make disclosures about things they have seen or experienced online.

From a survey of 8-17s who heard about Safer Internet Day in 2020, one in five said it prompted them talk to someone about something that had been worrying them online.

This sheet provides you with strategies and advice for speaking about sensitive issues and following up on any concerning comments.

Handling sensitive topics

Some discussions or questions which young people raise may need more consideration before answering. Below are some suggested ways of pausing the discussion:

'Save it for later'

Display a question wall or box in which questions, themes, or topics which may not be appropriate at that moment can be saved for future discussions. These could be submitted anonymously, or with a name if learners would like an individual response.

'Oops and ouch'

Anyone who finds a comment offensive or worrying can respond with 'ouch'. The speaker replies with 'oops' and is given an opportunity to explain. This method helps to avoid misunderstandings or resentment.

'Time out'

Call a 'time out' when learners are showing signs of fatigue and/or stress. This will provide them with a brief break and can give you an opportunity to assess the situation and decide how to proceed.

'Pause and park'

'Pause' a discussion and 'park' until a later date. Try to give the learners an idea of when this discussion will be 'unpaused.' This might be after the lesson, during a break or after discussion with another member of staff.

Educator's Pack
Handling sensitive topics and disclosures

Responding to a disclosure

- If you are worried about a child for any reason, tell your school/organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a senior colleague as soon as possible.

- Ensure that you are familiar with reporting procedures in your school/organisation and that you do not promise confidentiality to the child.

- Ensure that the child's own words are used and are not changed in any way; avoid asking leading questions.

- Take a calm and non-judgemental approach, particularly if it is about a sensitive issue.

- Give the child the opportunity to be included in making the report to your DSL or senior colleague, where appropriate.

Further advice

The UK Safer Internet Centre's 'Need Help?' page contains further information on reporting specific concerns to organisations outside of your school/organisation. **saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help**

The Professionals Online Safety Helpline is a free helpline offering advice and support to all members of the children's workforce on any online safety issues, including gaming, grooming, cyberbullying, sexting, inappropriate behaviour on social media and more. The helpline is available Monday to Friday 10am – 4pm.

0344 381 4772

helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline