Advice if your child is aged 6 to 9 years

- On computers and any other devices your child has access to, set the parental controls to the appropriate age, and enabling access to only appropriate content.
- Buy or download parental control software, switch it on and keep it updated. There are many versions on the market, which work in different ways and available at a range of prices, starting at free.
- The big four Internet Service Providers (ISPs) give their customers free parental controls which can be activated at any time. Check them out and take advantage of them.
- Agree a list of websites your child is allowed to visit and the kind of personal information they shouldn't reveal about themselves online, such as the name of their school or their home address.
- Set time limits for activities such as using the internet and games consoles.
- Make sure your child is accessing only age-appropriate content by checking out the age ratings on games, online TV, films and apps.
- Discuss with your older children what they should or shouldn't be showing their younger siblings on the internet, mobile devices, games consoles and other devices.
- Discuss with other parents subjects such as what age to buy children devices that connect to the internet.
- Don't be pressured by your child into letting them use certain technologies or view certain online content, if you don't think they are old enough or mature enough… no matter how much they pester you or what their friends' parents allow.

Is Your Child Using These Apps?

Using social networking sites of one kind or another is second-nature to most children. New sites are springing up every day and there are far too many to mention on this page.

Do *you* know what sites your kids are using? Do you know how they work, what your children and the people they 'meet' on them can say or do on them?

More to the point, are you aware of the potential dangers of kids using these various sites? Whether it's:

- Chatting with people they think are new 'friends', but who could actually intend to do them harm.

- Sharing or viewing inappropriate or adult images or other content.

- Being bullied or subject to other kinds of abuse.

-Being dared into carrying out dangerous or irresponsible acts on camera - 'neknominating' being one of the most widely publicised.

- Revealing personal or private information about themselves, friends or family. Or arranging to meet in person someone they've met online, when that person isn't who they said they were.

Many of these sites use live video as a means to communicate, or involve sending photos. This leaves the way open for people to send images which may be inappropriate.

Many have 'rules' such as minimum membership age, or the kind of content, images or content members are allowed to share. Invariably, the sign-up process relies on trust and in reality, it is easy for kids to pretend they're older. And the rules on type of content shared can easily be abused.

Snapchat

Snapchat is a popular photo sharing app for Apple and Android mobile devices, that lets users share their photos for a few seconds before they 'disappear'. But anyone receiving a pic can keep it by taking a screen shot, or new apps have been developed which enable the picture to be retained without even doing that. The site is being heavily criticised for making it easy for children to be stalked or groomed. The age limit to join the site is 13, but many children are so much younger.

Ask.fm

On Ask.fm, anonymous users ask other users questions. This means that they can easily hide their identity and effectively, say what they like without any consequences. Bullying and abuse on the site has allegedly led to very traumatic experiences amongst youngsters, in some cases tragically taking their own lives. The site owners have said that they will include a 'report abuse' button, provide optional registration and employ more people as moderators.

Yik Yak

"No profiles, no passwords, it's all anonymous", says the app's publicity. Designed as a means of posting news and messages in local communities and on college and school campuses, the app has gained a reputation as a tool for cyberbullies and its use has been banned in many schools in the UK and US.

Habbo

Habbo (full name Habbo Hotel) - is a social networking site aimed at teenagers, although we have heard of children as young as eight years old using it. Again, it has been the subject of considerable concern because of pornographic messages.

Shots of Me (or just Shots)

An app that enables users to take and post selfies, hence using only the front-view camera of their mobile phone. Shots has been subject to widespread concern about its use to send inappropriate photos and possibly resulting cyberbullying and blackmail.