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Gaming Addiction – Briefing Sheet – Young People and Parents/Carers/Trusted Adults

Lots of people like to play video or online games and spend many hours of their spare time gaming.

For lots of people this is ok; they have other hobbies and interests, see friends and they can still get on with their everyday life. For others this love of gaming can tip into being unhelpful and impact on their life in a damaging way.

It is possible to be at risk of or develop an addiction to gaming in a similar way to those who are at risk of or addicted to substances (such as drugs or alcohol).

Here are some signs that there might be a problem and it's time to get help:

- Constantly thinking about or wanting to play the game
- Feeling irritable and restless (fidgety) when not playing
- Underreporting or lying about how much time you've spent playing or playing in secret (such as in the middle of the night)
- Tiredness, headaches or hand pain from too much screen time and use of controllers
- Not wanting to pay attention to things like your personal hygiene (e.g., washing) or eating
- Not seeing friends as often or doing other things you used to enjoy doing as all your time is spent gaming
- Not wanting to go to school so that you can game

Not everyone who has a gaming addiction will experience all the signs and symptoms. Also, if you are experiencing some of these signs and symptoms this does necessarily mean that you have a gaming addition, but it is important to get help and advice.

According to experts, some of the most addictive online games at present are:

- Fortnite Battle Royale
- World of Warcraft
- Battlefield
- Farmville
- Call of Duty
- Minecraft
- Angry Birds
- Solitaire

…but there are of course more out there.

Signposting / Help From The Professionals

If you are a young person or a parent/carer/trusted adult and you can identify with the points raised around gaming addiction or need help with online concerns, have a look at some of the agencies, both local and national, that are focused around the digital environments accessible on a daily basis:

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UK Safer Internet Centre

Website: www.saferinternet.org.uk

Helpline: Revenge Porn Helpline, **03456 000 459**

What for?

UK Safer Internet Centre offers advice and guidance to young people, parents and professionals around staying safe online. This includes information on e-safety, types of harm, and a parents' guide to technology. On their website, you can report harmful online content and call for advice using the helpline number above.

Internet Matters

Website: www.internetmatters.org/

Helpline: Online resource with educational packs on Internet Safety (https://www.internetmatters.org/schools-esafety/)

What for?

From age-specific *online* safety checklists to guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices, you'll find a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world.

ThinkUKnow

Website: www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

Helpline: 0370 496 7622

What for?

'ThinkUKnow' is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline. Explore one of the six 'ThinkUKnow' websites for advice about staying safe when you or a child is on a phone, tablet or computer.

Ask About Games

Website: www.askabout.games.com

Helpline: 02075 340 590

What for?

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'Ask About Games' answer questions parents and players have about video game age ratings, provide advice on how to play games safely and responsibly, and offer families helpful tips to ensure they get the most out of the games they enjoy together.
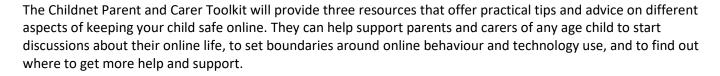
Childnet – Parent and Carer Toolkit

Website: https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/parent-and-carer-toolkit

Helpline: 0207 639 6967

What for?

The Childnet Parent and Carer Toolkit will provide three resources that offer practical tips and advice on different aspects of keeping your child safe online. They can help support parents and carers of any age child to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support.

South West Grid For Learning (SWGfL) – Resource Portal

Website: https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/

Helpline: 0345 601 3203

What for?

SWGfL specialise in supporting schools, agencies and families to affect lasting change with the safe and secure use of technology. They have built an international reputation for developing multi award-winning educational online safety tools, services and resources.

SafeToNet

Website: https://safetonet.com/foundation/covid/

What For?

SafeToNet is an app for parents to help them safeguard their children from online risks like cyberbullying and sexting, whilst respecting their child's rights to privacy. The SafeToNet Foundation is providing UK families with free access to 1 million licences during the coronavirus pandemic.
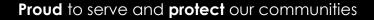
Net Aware

Website: www.net-aware.org.uk (via the NSPCC)

Helpline: 0800 1111

What for?

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Net Aware is a guide for parents to the most popular sites, apps and games that young people use. Using reviews from adults and children, it helps parents decide if a site is right for their child, if it is age appropriate and explores what risks they might encounter, enabling parents or professionals to help keep their children safe online. The NSPCC have just launched a refreshed Net Aware site.

Parent Info – via CEOP and The Parent Zone

Website: https://parentinfo.org/

What For?

Parent Info is a collaboration between Parent Zone and CEOP, providing support and guidance for parents and carers related to the digital world from leading experts and organisations.

Own It

Website: https://www.bbc.com/ownit

What For?

The BBC have a website and app called 'Own It'. The website has a lot of content for children to help them navigate their online lives, and the free smartphone app comes with a special keyboard which can intervene with help and support in the moments that children need it the most. It can be downloaded for free in the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's 'Parents Protect'

Website: https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/

What For?

The Parents Protect website provides advice on how to help protect children from child sexual abuse.

Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) Portal / 'Parent Zone'

Website: www.ceop.police.uk

Helpline: Via 'Childline' – 0800 1111

What for?

CEOP are here to help and give you and children advice, and you can make a report directly to them if something has happened online which has made children feel unsafe, scared or worried. This might be from someone they know in real life, or someone they have only ever met online. CEOP take all reports seriously and they will do everything they can to keep you safe.

'Zip It App' – via Childline

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Website: www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/zipit-app/

Helpline: 0800 111

What for?

If someone is trying to get a young person to send inappropriate content, the 'Zipit' app (downloadable from the Google Play store or Apple App Store) can help keep the situation under control.

Respond to unwanted chat with the power of GIFs taken straight from the app and use the flirting guide to navigate intimate chats, including tips from other young people.

Stop It Now!

Website: https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/

What For?

You can contact Stop It Now for information and advice if you have concerns about someone's behaviour, including children who may be displaying concerning sexual behaviour.

Marie Collins Foundation

Website:
https://www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk/

What For?

You can contact The Marie Collins Foundation via email on help@mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk for support, including advice and individual counselling, for your child if they have been subjected to online sexual abuse - support is also offered to parents and carers.

The Internet Watch Foundation

Website: https://report.iwf.org.uk/en

What For?

If you see sexual images or videos of someone under 18 years of age online, report it anonymously to the Internet Watch Foundation who can work to remove them from the web and help to identify victims and survivors.

The Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM)

Website: www.ygam.org

Helpline: 0203 837 4963

What For?

YGAM **is a national charity with a social purpose to inform, educate, safeguard and build digital resilience amongst young and vulnerable people. Helping them to make informed decisions and understand the consequences around gambling and gaming.**