



# The Stable School

## Safeguarding Newsletter

### Safeguarding your child at home online.

## LATEST ONLINE CONCERNS - CHROMING

### What is 'chroming'?

The term 'chroming' refers to a recent drug trend in which individuals inhale the fumes of intoxicants such as aerosols, paint, or solvents to experience a high. The name came from the original act of sniffing chrome-based paint.

Although using inhalants isn't new, recent social media trends are adding a new dimension of peer pressure through the 'TikTok Challenge'. The challenge, also known as 'WhipTok' has sparked renewed interest among teenagers, who are being encouraged to try this dangerous practice.

Chroming can take several forms:

- **Sniffing:** Inhaling vapours directly from a container, such as a nail polish remover bottle.
- **Bagging:** Inhaling vapours, like air freshener spray, directly from a plastic or paper bag.
- **Huffing:** Inhaling petrol, lighter fluid, or other vapours soaked into fabric.

The worries are that some young people may think chroming is a 'safer' way to get high rather than misusing street or prescription drugs. Products used in chroming, like spray paint bottles and markers, are easy to purchase and don't have the same restrictions of some drugs or age limitations like alcohol. They are also unlikely to draw attention from teachers, parents, caregivers, or the police.

### Why is it dangerous?

As well as the short-term effects typical of substance abuse, experts have warned that 'chroming' can lead to long term brain damage and also damage to internal organs.



## EMERALD CHAT – WHAT IS IT?



Emerald Chat is an anonymous chat website that encourages users to make new friends by engaging with strangers.

- It uses several aspects of popular social media platforms, such as Feeds and Direct Messaging to encourage users.
- The app includes a paid 'Gold' membership, which allows users to send images, choose the gender of user they speak to and 'priority matching'.
- There have numerous reports of risky behaviour over the last few years, including several claims that the platform has been 'made for paedophiles'.
- The platform claims to use AI technology and human moderation to detect nudity and other inappropriate imagery within the chats.
- Emerald Chat can be accessed via web browser. It does not currently have a mobile app, but it can still be used on web browser apps ie: Safari.



### Age Rating

The platform states that all users must be over 18 years old. However, online safety experts discovered that the age verification is ineffective, with only a self-declaration statement to confirm that the user is over 18.

## VENT – WHAT IS IT?



Vent is an online platform designed to be a 'social diary' for users to share their feelings. It sells itself towards children and young people as a platform where they can express themselves, 'chill out' and have their mood 'lifted'.

Experts found that it features unhealthy and potentially dangerous behaviours, some of which are age-inappropriate or illegal.

- The app's intention is to create positive, supportive and understanding communities for people all over the world.
- It operates as a 'constant feed' of user's posts from the general public, special interest groups, on-to-one chats or a private diary.
- The app has been criticised for enabling a vacuum of negative emotions and comments, as well as allowing harmful peer-to-peer support.
- There are very few effective safety settings on Vent, seems to be reliant on users reporting inappropriate posts.

### HARMFUL CONTENT

There is an abundance of inappropriate and explicit content, including harmful or triggering topics such as sexual fetishes, eating disorders, and self-harm methods.

### AGE RATING

Vent states that users can only post to the app if they are 'aged 13 years or older'. However, other ratings suggest 16+ or 17+ age limits, as the app may include themes such as profanity/crude humour, mild sexual content, nudity and drug use reference – content that is not suitable for Vent's suggested age rating.

# My Child's First Device

5 Steps to Make Phones, Tablets, and Laptops Safer

You might be deciding to give your child their first phone, tablet, or laptop (or third, fourth, fifth – even a new update). This is a big decision! The responsibility and freedom that comes with owning a device is a big step for children – and you! It might even be their first “grown up” responsibility.

As a parent or carer, it's important to remember that even if a child is tech-savvy, they need to be taught how to be tech-safe. We know this can be daunting with various device brands, apps, and settings to choose from. Our online safety experts have created 5 steps to help you make that first device (or brand-new model) safer for the child or young person in your care.



## Remember!

This is an exciting time in your child's life! You want to be a part of that in a positive way that encourages them to share with you and trust you. If you take the time to teach them, they will be empowered in their online actions and behaviours for the better.

1

### Do your homework

Make sure your home environment is secure and ready for your child to be online. Many major broadband providers offer age restriction settings so check with your provider to ensure these restrictions are put in place.

Many retailers offer free Parental Controls to their customers. You can find Parental Control walkthroughs on most popular provider websites.

Check the device's brand website for simple walkthroughs of where to find privacy settings on your child's specific device.



2

### Set up the device with your child

Taking the time to sit down with your child and set up the device together will help you both get to know how the device works, allow you to implement ~~SafeSearch~~ filters on ~~search~~ engines, and set up in-app purchase restrictions. You can use the device settings to set up agreed upon restrictions, like Screen Time and App Limits.



Explain why these settings are important to protect children and young people from online risks and that these restrictions will be lifted when they are old enough. Ensure your personal account is set as the Parent account and make sure your parental control PIN number is secure and random.

3

### Discuss and agree on healthy phone and device habits

Once the device has been set up, take the time to agree on some healthy rules and boundaries for how they will use the device. This can include rules like when and where they can use their device, screen time allowance and which apps are allowed to be used.



Be realistic ~~on~~ what will work in your household. If your child has friends with different rules, remind them that ~~what~~ works for one family might not work for another! As the parent or carer, you are responsible for the way your child uses their device and they will need guidance, especially if this is your child's first independent responsibility.

4

### Check-in with your child

Check-in with your child about their device use. It doesn't have to be a big sit-down conversation! Informal chats over the dinner table, in the car or while watching television as a family can have the biggest impact. Ask questions like, "Tell me about your ~~favorite~~ app! Why do you like to use it?" or, "How has your device helped you today?"

Online safety is never a one-off conversation - it's a continuing dialogue. Show your child that you're interested in their responses and thoughts to foster an environment of openness and trust between you and the child in your care.



5

### Keep Yourself Informed

We live in a digital world that changes daily. The most responsible thing you can do in keeping your child's device safe is to keep yourself informed.

Stay alert to trends and threats that they may be exposed to. With many companies beginning to offer “kid” versions of their platforms, knowing what is safe and what is suspect will help you make the best decision for your child. Luckily, we have some excellent resources to assist you that are reliable and relevant. Visit our website and social media pages.



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**oursafetycentre.co.uk**

How to stay safer on popular platforms





## PARENTAL ON-LINE SAFETY TIPS

With the technological advances that had to be made during the lockdown periods, learning from home was forced to be increased. This meant that young people were spending a lot more time online doing their schoolwork, gaming, and socialising. However, it's important we all consider how we can help keep young people safer online. Here's some information about what your child may enjoy online and what you can do to help keep them safer!

### Online gaming

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play.

For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect your child, watch this short video:

[In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers](#)

### Sharing images and videos

Young people often [share](#) images or 'selfies' and there is potential for some of those to be nude or nearly nude images. Young people share 'nudes' for [a number of different reasons](#), and some situations are riskier than others.

For information about the contexts in which images are shared and how best to respond, take a look at [nude selfies: a parent's guide](#).

### More information?

[Thinkuknow](#) is the education programme from the National Crime Agency's Child Protection Command CEOP (NCA-CEOP). Their aim is to protect children and young people from sexual abuse online.

For more information, advice and guidance, visit their [parents website](#) and download their [home activity worksheets](#) for fun, online safety activities to do with your family.

## Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online

**Have an ongoing conversation:** Continue to talk about the apps, games, and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report.

For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

**Make sure they know where to go for support:** Remind your child they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. Remind them that they won't be in trouble and that you are there to help. For a breakdown of report services, visit:

[Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)

**Make sure they know about NCA CEOP:** Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.

