



# Internet Safety

Although research has shown that the internet may be particularly beneficial for learners with special educational needs (SEN), many of these young people are potentially more vulnerable and more at risk than others when using ICT. Therefore, it is a good idea to introduce your learners to internet safety before using these resources.

It is not always easy to get the balance right between empowering young people to use the internet effectively, and protecting them from online risk (for example, accessing unsuitable material, making unsuitable contacts or harming a computer by downloading a virus).

Some learners with SEN may not understand much of the terminology due to language delays or disorders.

Some do not understand the concept of friendship, and therefore trust everyone implicitly. They may not know how to make judgements about what is safe information to share, and therefore may give strangers online access to their personal information, which could potentially be harmful.

There is also growing concern around cyberbullying. We need to remember that some learners with SEN or disabilities may be vulnerable to being bullied via the internet, or may not recognise that they are being bullied. In addition, some may not appreciate how their own online behaviour may be considered bullying.

There is a possibility that learners might access upsetting, harmful or otherwise inappropriate material.

They could also be targeted by aggressive marketing messages which are difficult to distinguish from factual content.

CCEA have developed a Learning for Life and Work thematic unit, Into Independence, Get Connected, available at [http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen\\_inclusion](http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen_inclusion). This thematic unit provides lesson ideas and resources on internet safety.

There are also many good tips for internet safety on the internet which you can adapt to meet your school needs and share with parents, such as the following:

- [www.childnet.com/resources](http://www.childnet.com/resources)
- [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)
- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)