



Boarding the e-safety train

Mobile Phones

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|  | <p>Mobile phones are easily acquirable these days. While many parents and carers provide their young people with a mobile phone, there is nothing to stop them buying Pay As You Go mobiles over the counter from a wide range of outlets. So, some things to check might be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are you sure there isn't a second phone somewhere? ➤ Do you check your bills? (Are they exceeding bandwidth allowances. Are you regularly incurring excess charges – are you being billed for purchases you didn't know about? (Some purchases made by phone appear on your credit card/bank statement and not on the phonebill. It is easy to miss them. ➤ Are they exceeding their airtime or text limit? (Many operators allow them to do this and merely charge you for the extra usage – often at very high rates) <p>Sometimes, a young person who, previously, was addicted to their phone suddenly no longer wants to use it – sometimes they even “lose” or damage it deliberately. This could be the outward sign of something you need to investigate.</p> <p>Would your young person feel comfortable with letting you look through their phone from time to time – particularly friends lists, and message strings? (Highly contentious, but necessary sometimes.</p> |
|  | <p>Do your young people get anxious about their phones? What do they talk to each other about? Do they walk out of the room when they have a phone call? (This may be perfectly fine, but asking who just called is reasonable.)</p> |
|  | <p>There are a lot of issues here, but some of the key questions you should ask are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have they had any nuisance calls? ➤ Have they had any marketing texts, or premium rate texts? ➤ Have they downloaded ring tones – if so, were they from a reputable supplier? ➤ Have they been bullied on their phone? ➤ Have they used the phone camera to take any unwise images? (Highly sensitive this one, but relevant, unfortunately.) ➤ Where available, are parental controls in place on the phone? (Talk to your mobile phone company about this – there are some that have them, and some that don't. What provision does your supplier make to a) keep your youngsters safe, and b) protect you against financial scams and positive marketing? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask your young people what they would do if there was an incoming text/phone call/MMS that upset them, or frightened them, or made them feel uncomfortable. (The number one response to this is “I would delete it”. This is not necessarily the most appropriate response.) ➤ How would your mobile phone provider protect you against fraudulent use of your phone? (Have you asked them?) ➤ Have a discussion whereby you invite them to tell you what the risks around mobile phones might be – make a list, and then you will have automatically created your..... |
|  | <p>....action plan!</p> <p>Once you know what your concerns are, you can deal with them. E-safety is all about personal empowerment. YOU can and should be in control. Remember that those who use technology to abuse work in the hope that you will never do any of the things suggested here. It can be embarrassing to talk about, but that must not stop us from doing so!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bullet-point the things you want to do ➤ List the people you might need to assist you. (Including your mobile phone provider – they are happy enough to take your money – they need to be part of keeping people safe as well.) ➤ Put actions together, say who will do them and by when. ➤ Every time your mobile phone company offers you an upgrade, remember YOU CAN HAGGLE WITH THEM. You do not have to accept out-of-the-box offers, you can get yourself a really good deal if you threaten to go elsewhere. They want and need your business – that puts you in the driving seat! If you don't like what your current provider is offering, remember, you can always shop around. |
|  | <p>A great many phone companies sell you the idea of a handset, rather than the phone plan itself. Just ask the average youngster if they would like an iphone4s! If you Google them, you will find that the price of an unlocked iphone 4S starts at £499.00 (at time of writing) and that is for the basic model – the 64gb model is £699.00. Now, compare this with the typical talk plan £45.00 per month for two years. £1080 in total for a £499.00 phone. Remember, mobile phone suppliers buy in bulk, so the cost to them per phone is far cheaper than the official list price.</p> <p>It is the talk plan and security that matter. (Difficult to convince the teenager of this, but it is true nonetheless.)</p> <p>Examine every part of the “deal” carefully – if it seems too good to be true, it usually is.</p> |

Finally...

Think about the disposal of your old phones. They have changed a lot in the last five years, and most phones now hold a huge amount of information. It is possible to recycle old mobile phones, and some companies will pay you to do this – once you have parted with your phone to them, they will recycle not only the phone, but treat anything on it as theirs too – including your contact lists, web searches, and other information. You need to be very certain you have not given them anything more than the phone itself.

Ask your mobile phone company about “safe deletion” of information stored on your phone. Once they tell you, please make sure to ask if this method makes the data unrecoverable.