# ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - May 2015

Already this month we've had an awareness week around computer fraud and online security and held numerous discussions around privacy. Many of the concerns which people raised relate to the security of their details online, online shopping and banking, and which organisations have access to their personal information and what controls are put in place to regulate this access. In contrast, when we've spoken to children and young people, their primary privacy concern is how they can keep their online and mobile activities private from their parents.

In this issue of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter, we're going to look at how we might develop strong privacy practices for children and young people, and how this could be balanced with a parent's responsibility to ensure their child is safe online.

**Surveillance vs supervision**

Many parents have asked us which software is the best for tracking their child's activities online. Whilst this question often comes from a desire to ensure their child is safe online, it may not always be the best approach to helping a child to manage their privacy and keep them safe. It's important to find a balance between keeping an eye out on what your child is doing online, and providing them with opportunities to learn privacy management skills; a balance between surveillance and supervision.

Younger children need more guidance and supervision when it comes to the use of the internet and parents should explore filtering and monitoring software to help them manage their child's use of technology.

## Time2Talk

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

Do you think it's important to keep some things private?

Why might Mum or Dad want to know what you are doing online?

How private or secure are your online accounts?

What could I do to help you manage your privacy?

Researching options online or speaking to someone from your local computer store can help you to determine which products are most appropriate for your family's needs. There are also a range of built-in parental controls on most operating systems, mobile devices and gaming consoles which you may wish to utilise.

As a child grows and develops some independence, they also need more room to explore without covert or overt surveillance by their parents. This doesn't mean they are given free reign, they still need boundaries, but a gradual loosening of restrictions can help them to put into use the privacy and relationship management skills they are developing.

Filtering and monitoring options may still be useful, as long as their use and justification for their implementation are explained to your child and not just surreptitiously imposed. Oppressive surveillance can encourage a young person to become more secretive in their online activities, so that they have accounts which their parents see, but others that their parents have no idea about and where they have fewer people to go to for assistance.

Any form of technological approach to supervising a young person's use of technology should only be used in conjunction with honest and open discussions around privacy, relationship and reputation management. Many young people know how to bypass filters so a combination of approaches should be used to help them develop privacy management skills.

**Previous e-newsletters**

Previous editions of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter will shortly be available via the resources page on the ThinkUKnow website. If you wish to distribute these to others, please ensure they are attributed to ThinkUKnow and encourage people to subscribe so that they receive these e-newsletters regularly.

**Regular privacy check-ups**

Whilst children and young people may be focussed on keeping things private from their parents, they also need to understand what information they need to protect from others and how to do this. Encouraging regular privacy check-ups can help make these behaviours routine and develop strong privacy practices. Some activities you may wish to undertake with your family include:

- Changing passwords – this should be done at least twice a year. Encouraging strong passwords (at least eight characters in length and a mixture of upper and lower case letters, numbers and symbols) and passphrases for all accounts and not using the same password for all accounts are important steps in managing privacy.
- Checking privacy settings – social media apps and sites may change their privacy policies so it's important to regularly review privacy settings to make sure they are as secure as they can be.
- Managing digital relationships – privacy management is not just about the technical steps you can take to secure information, but also carefully considering who you allow to access that information. The only people accepted as online friends or followers should be people you actually know and trust. As offline relationships change, this needs to be reflected online and those people removed as online contacts.
- Researching digital shadow - regularly research your name, email address or usernames online to find out just how private you are. This can be a great way to see if there is information out there about you which should be private.