

#DITTO

STAY SAFE ● HAVE FUN ● REPEAT

EDITION 22 - JANUARY 2020

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Foreword from **Alan Mackenzie**

Welcome to Edition 22 of **#DITTO**

Hi there, I'm Alan Mackenzie.

I'm an independent consultant specialising in online safety, specifically within education to children, young people, schools and other organizations, and parents.

I'm a strong believer that technology, for the most part, is neutral; behaviour is the most important aspect.

To understand behaviour, we have to be a part of children's lives in order to understand what they're doing with technology and why.

We have to be curious and guide them to realise the wonderful opportunities that the online world gives to all of us, and be there to support them when they need it.

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Christmas and the new year break feels like such a long time ago now it feels a little weird to sit here and type happy new year to you, but as it's the first DITTO of 2020 I feel it's only right, so happy new year, I hope you managed to have a lovely break.

I had originally planned to take a week off but ended up taking two, which meant the to-do list got pushed to the right. Oh well, nothing like a bit of pressure to focus the brain.

January, February and March are historically my busiest times of the year. I don't know why, it's just the way it has always been. This term has started well, I've done a few all-day online safety courses with school clusters which I really enjoy doing for a couple of reasons: firstly having small groups of staff from 10-15 schools together means there's great collaboration where we can share thoughts, opinions and ideas. They're always lively days where I can bring school staff right up to date. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the school, they can share the cost of getting me for the day rather than having to pay the costs all by themselves.

I've only spoken to students at 2 schools so far this term so I don't have much in the way of new information for you, but that will soon change as the term goes on. Incidentally don't forget Safer Internet Day isn't too far away. If you're looking for someone to come into school please don't ask me, I'm completely booked all that week, however I do know very experienced and trustworthy people who have a couple of days spare so feel free to drop me an email.

Alan





Socialisation or social isolation?



OPINION

“Social media is like taking cocaine.”

“My son is addicted to gaming.”

“Teenagers are addicted to their devices.”

“The 10 addiction warning signs to look out for.”

Those statements above are just a few of the things I hear quite often, either from parents, concerns in schools or headlines in the media, but is it as simple as that? Personally I don't think so, and some of the headlines we see in the media are nothing more than scare tactics to draw you into the article.

I'll give you an example: teenagers are anti-social because they're always in front of their devices.

Looking from the outside, particularly as a parent, you may draw that conclusion, but have we taken the time to find out what they are actually doing, rather than what we think they're doing? I don't think we have, we seem to be making lots of assumptions with very little to back-up those assumptions.

I try to look at things from a different perspective and I know that, for the large majority, the

reason they are always on their devices is because they're connected to their friends, in other words socialisation. Furthermore, given the always-on world we are now in, doesn't that make this generation of children the most social generation there has ever been? Just because it was different 'in our day' does that mean it's bad?

I don't think it does; I think there is way too much demonisation going on and that's to the detriment of education both in school and at home because with that attitude children and young people will simply switch off; they won't listen. Sure I'd love to see children out playing more, getting exercise, getting involved in activities and so much more, but are we seeing a societal change? I think we are, and I think this is what has many concerned.

Let's be honest, for myself and I suspect the large majority of people who read DITTO, we weren't brought up in an always-connected world, we didn't have these devices, if we wanted to socialise we had to go out in the horrible dark

evenings, pouring down with rain, and we accepted that as normal, we just got on with it.

But transport yourself back in time when you were younger, pretend you had this thing in your hands which meant you didn't have to get freezing cold or drenched through, you could simply tap on an app and be with all your friends and a wider world in an instant. You haven't got to search for something to do, like find a play park that hasn't been vandalised (if one even exists in your area). You haven't got to stand on a street corner with all your teen mates because there's nothing else to do, you can open up a piece of software and be in an incredible, re-imagined world. What would you have done?

What I'm trying to say is that we need to stop thinking about what we did when we were their age, we need to stop thinking in terms of addiction when there is little to no conclusive evidence proving causation. There's plenty of correlated evidence but you can put 2 facts together and come up with any theory you want, but it doesn't prove a cause.





To explain that with an over-simplified example: you could carry out a study with a group of teens and correlate how much time they spend on Fortnite and how much time they spend with their friends in real life. You establish that the amount of time they're spending on Fortnite is excessive compared to the time they spend with their friends and conclude that the games are causing a problem, perhaps they're addicted!

As simple as the example is, it's incredibly common to see this; two facts randomly stuck together and a conclusion made. That's a correlation. To establish causation, in other words to establish whether the fact that games (or the time spent playing games) are the cause of the problem is a very different beast, and the research is grey at best.

To give another example, one of the common concerns I hear from parents is that their children are addicted to their games, or spend too much time in front of their screens and can I help? It's a completely understandable concern; we all want our children to be out more, to socialise 'in real life' more, so this isn't a dig at parents. Furthermore if all you see are those scaremongering headlines about addiction and

all of the other nasty things on the web you have every right to be concerned. But in answer to the question 'can you help?' the answer is no, at least not with such limited information, but I will give that parent a couple of things to think about:

Firstly, establish why they are spending so much time on there. Forget about the game, what are they actually doing? If the reply is 'I'm playing Fortnite with my friends', remove the word Fortnite from the sentence and what you're left with is 'I'm playing with my friends' - socialisation.

Secondly, is something wrong with the child, has something happened? For example a falling out at school, or at the other extreme something like a traumatic event like a death in the family or parents divorcing? If so, is your child using their games to escape that trauma? These are really important points because unless you establish the cause, why they're spending so much time on their games, their TikTok or whatever else it is, you'll never get to the root cause of the issues that you're seeing.

Before Christmas I asked some schools if they could ask their students the amount of

notifications they get during the day and waiting for them on their devices when they wake up in the morning. I haven't had a chance to put these stats together yet (due to taking an extended break) but there were some interesting statements that came back. For example:

"When people send me a message it might contain a swear word. My parents see this and confiscate my phone as punishment."

I'm confused with this, why has that child been punished for something that was completely out of their control and by confiscating the phone what lesson has that child learned? To be more secretive? But in the context of this opinion piece, that child has now become socially isolated from his friends due to something that was completely out of his control.

To conclude, what I'm trying to say is that we need to be thinking about things differently, not from the perspective of when we were kids, but from the perspective here and now, their lives, which includes their online lives

Can this excessive use (whatever excessive means) cause problems? Yes, without a doubt.

Can it lead to an increased level of risk? Definitely.

But it is us adults that give these devices to children, sometimes without properly thinking through the consequences. We give them the ability to communicate with the wider world, to socialise, and on a whim we'll take those devices away, socially isolating them.

Remember this is an opinion piece. I'm not trying to change your opinion but simply ask you to think things through differently. This is my opinion because these are the very conversations I have with children and, at the very least, we need to take their opinions into account otherwise we adults will never learn, and if we don't learn, then how on earth do we teach them?

Alan Mackenzie



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LIVESTREAMING Increasing Concerns

In May 2018 the Internet Watch Foundation published a trends report looking at the distribution of captures of live-streamed child sexual abuse. If you haven't seen that report you can follow this link to download/view the PDF version - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-1>

We know for a fact that live-streaming is becoming more popular, particularly with children and young people. Apps such as Twitch (mainly gaming) and TikTok (acting out) are increasingly popular, the latter especially so, but there are plenty of other apps out there that that you can live stream with.

In summary, the IWF trends report looked at data from a 3 month period in late 2017. Some of the key findings were:

- 98% of images showed children assessed as being 13 years or younger.

- 96% of the images featured girls.



- 40% of the images were assessed as Category A or B - the two worst categories of CSA.
- 100% of the imagery had been harvested from the original location and we redistributed on third party websites. Essentially this means they were copied from their original source and appeared elsewhere, such as online forums.

This report highlighted a very clear indication that we needed to do more; we knew this was starting to happen but we didn't really know the scale of it, which is why reports such as those from the IWF are so important for the job that we do.

Prior to this in 2015, the IWF produced a report in regards to youth produced sexual imagery (commonly called sexting images) which showed a significant rise in numbers

and a very concerning drop in ages producing this material.

It's clear that this is now moving to livestreaming; it has been for some time and it's getting bigger. Midway in Jan 2020 the IWF released further statements regarding livestreaming: a third of explicit material found online by the IWF analysts are self-produced by children, with more than three quarters (29,100 or 78%) featured children aged 11 to 13, predominantly girls.

The analysts go on to say that they could clearly see children responding to instructions or saying things such as, "I'm not doing that unless I get 1,000 likes." In other words, the

children are being exploited; they're being groomed.

We need to do more about this, we need to talk more with the children of all ages at home and at school about this and we need to show adults where and how to report this material if they happen to come across it.

To read a little more about the latest IWF statements you can view an article in The Independent here - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-4>

Alan Mackenzie



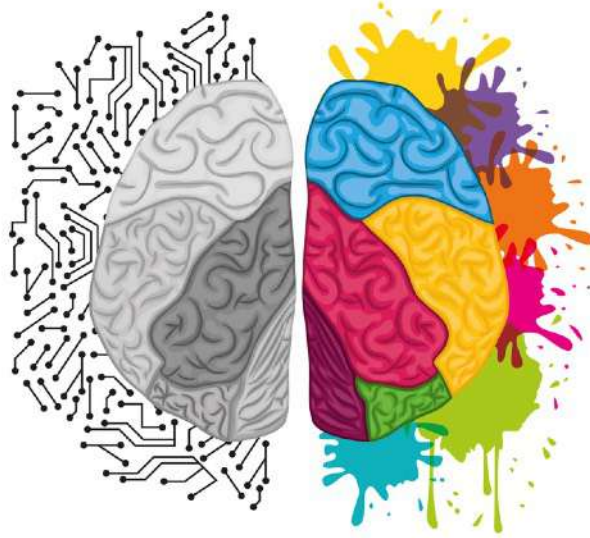
To find out more about the work of the Internet Watch Foundation, subscribe to their email list and to make reports of material you may find online, go to www.iwf.org.uk

There are lots of useful videos to watch on their YouTube channel but do be careful of the content especially if you're around children - <https://www.youtube.com/user/IWFHotline>

To see the trends report from 2018 regarding live streamed CSA - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-1>

To see the Online Produced Sexual Content trends report go here - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-2>

Cyber Trauma



Catherine Knibbs (BSc, MBACP (Accred), UKCP Adult Psychotherapeutic Counselling, Doctoral Clinical Researcher, Cyber Specialist Therapist and Cybertrauma Theorist. Cath is the leading researcher on cyber trauma in the UK, specialising in online abuse in all forms and provides consultancy, education and training on this topic.

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2020 visions and social media pressures.

Don't believe the hype!

Are you feeling the pressure to be the best teacher, parent, mentor or adult around children? Does this mean you have to diet, exercise, use technology to track your progress and ensure that you document and capture each and every step on the way on social media?

If not, why not?

I am jesting with you here as I'm currently seeing so many posts that relate to the fact we have hit another zero in the year and this seems to bring about a funny human behaviour of what Jamie Wheal calls hustle porn and I am going to call it comparison.com crap.

This is the new misery for all and is a sure fire way for you to feel worthless, out of sync with your peers and family. It is the strike to the heart that would take out a wizard in Harry Potter. This is the downside of a human trend called motivational BS and every January it seeps out slowly until the end of the month when people realise they have failed at something or other and it's in the domain of social media for all to see. It sucks doesn't it?

So imagine if you are a child or young person and this Christmas was a particularly difficult one for your parents in terms of cash flow, considering the difficulties we have faced as a country over the last few years, the rise of the food banks and the consumerism of the holidays.



What lengths would you go to, to hide your social media posts, or ask relatives to keep the tags/posts limited? Do you want your friends to see what Christmas looked like for you?

What about if you had a particularly good Christmas and now have the latest trainers, bags and in today's society the most up to date gaming console and games with DLC and in-app purchases?

Which way do you turn, what do you share? What pressures do you face? Can you as an adult empathise and connect with this feeling? How do you have conversations that matter and can be helpful to the young person? Do you think you will have an effect if you say something like "be happy with what you've got" because let's face it, are many of us happy with what we've got?

Well, how about doing just that and being a role model. Use gratitude to emphasise that we don't have to be the next catwalk model, YouTube

sensation or the best "x, y or z", why not have a go at being good enough and happy with that?

Did you know this can actually change how your brain works, and creates new connections? How great is that? Small moments of gratitude to act as an antithesis to the new year new you pressures and the same can be applied to the young people who feel they have to compete in cyberspace and in educational settings.

Help is on its way in the form of using science to change our view of the world and to be much more coherent humans. We have to model as adults for young people to take the behaviour on board. So have a go, try gratitude practices and take a moment to be happy with everything around you.

Cath

Cyber Synapse - by Cath Knibbs

A podcast for parents and professionals for cyber issues.

<http://bit.ly/cysynapse>

MONKEY



Monkey is a social chat app where you can video chat (live stream) with other random users and collect bananas to buy merchandise.

Rated 13+ but typically with no age verification when you create an account, the app has been around for a couple of years now, however I have heard of a couple of concerns in the last couple of weeks (one very serious child protection issue) and there are plenty of concerns raised in the media in regards to children using the app being contacted by adults, some with a sexual motivation.

When you create an account on Monkey you have to input your phone number, age (you'll have to lie if you're under 13), Snapchat name and whether you're male or female. Once this is done Monkey tries to connect you with others of a similar age.

Interestingly, I tried to download the app on my iPhone so that I could refresh my knowledge of it but I couldn't find the app. Whether Apple has removed it I don't know, but when you search for

Monkey it points you to a number of other live apps that allow you to connect with random strangers.

When I searched for the app on my Apple Mac it states the app is not available in the UK. However, the app is available on the Google Play (Android) store.

The concerns with this app (and any similar app) should hopefully be obvious in regards to contact based risks. The natural curiosity of children and the fact that their friends may be using the app could lead children into downloading and using it without your knowledge, so just be vigilant.

For parents, if your child asks you if they can use an app, or if you discover an app on their device that you don't recognise it's worth taking a look on Common Sense Media to get an understanding of what the app is all about, any concerns and importantly, have a look through the reviews that other parents leave. You can see the review for the Monkey app here - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-10>

SEXTING IN SCHOOLS

The Contextual Safeguarding Network has produced a nice little video titled "Sexting in schools: responses to abuse through image sharing." At 3 and a half minutes it's clear and straight to the point.

<http://bit.ly/ditto22-3>



FAKE NEWS

Internet matters have created a lovely little guide to build critical thinking about fake news and what sources to trust. This would be handy to use in school or at home to talk with the children.

<http://bit.ly/ditto22-5>



PROJECT ARTEMIS - TACKLING CHILD EXPLOITATION

Microsoft have developed software where criminals attempting to lure children for sexual purposes through online chat can be detected, addressed and reported. This is fantastic and a huge well done should go to Microsoft - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-6>



YOUTUBE - CHANGES TO KIDS' CONTENT

Due to increased criticism (and fines levied on YouTube), they're making some big changes to comply with the law. In part targeted ads will be banned along with push notifications. This is a game changer, especially for those who create content for kids and make money via those channels. You can read a little more on the BBC Newsround article here - <http://bit.ly/ditto22-7>

Or you can see the original YouTube video explaining the changes in more detail here <http://bit.ly/ditto22-8>



IS TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION A MYTH?

I think it is, but more importantly so do scientists. Andrew Przybalski is, in my opinion, one of the goto people and in this short video he gives a compelling opinion — <http://bit.ly/ditto22-9>



DOING IT TOGETHER

Advice for parents

CURIOSITY

As a parent, curiosity is one of the best strategies we can have to help guide our children, regardless of their age, to be safe online and enjoy the wonderful opportunities that technology and a connected world give to them.

To a certain degree technology can help us keep children safe by blocking inappropriate content, preventing children talking to random people and much more, but it's by no means a solution; technology cannot mitigate behavioural issues and as children grow we have to give them more freedom so that they can start to find their own way. In that respect there's little difference between the real world and the online world, although you may argue that the online world gives them access to a much wider range of risks and issues. That's fair and true, but prevention is no cure.

For many parents, what their children are doing is the foremost concern; the unknown, hidden things that they might be getting up to in their bedroom and when you don't know your imagination can run wild.

Some might say that the solution is to keep the devices downstairs, that children shouldn't be left to their own devices (so to speak). In part I would agree with that, particularly for younger children, but it's old, outdated advice.

If you read my opinion piece I hope you will have taken away one of the fundamental points: finding out why things are happening is key and we can only do this properly two ways:

1. Talk to them.
2. Do it with them.

Talk to them

Ask them why they are doing what they're doing and more often than not you'll find out they're just having, learning and creating new things, socialising with their friends or they're just bored.

Do it with them

Once you've found out, have a go with them. Play their game with them, even if it's just for 20 minutes and take that opportunity to ask them questions about it such as who they're playing with, do they know how to report someone for inappropriate behaviour etc. And if they don't then find out and show them.

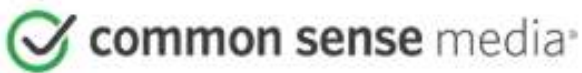
Ask them about their favourite app; why is TikTok so popular? What do you do on there? Do you ever get messages from people you don't know and if so, what do you do about it? What are the favourite channels you like to watch?

None of this is difficult, most would say it's simple common sense, yet it is questions such as this that I will ask children in the classroom. Now and again, it's these very questions where I will get a disclosure; something doesn't sound quite right, or it's out of the ordinary for the age of this child. But as a parent, you are also creating a bond, a trusting relationship. You are taking interest in their activities (even if you're not interested in the slightest about games) which in turn means they will come to you if something is wrong.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

I'm quite often asked what the best resources for parents are. Not an easy question to answer as it would depend on what your concerns are, your level of knowledge, or a particular risk that you would like more information on.

Below are 4 of what I believe to be the best, current and up to date resources.



Common Sense Media

To learn more about the games or apps your children are using, Common Sense Media covers thousands, which includes advice and reviews from other parents:

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>



Internet Matters

Tons of age-specific related information created specifically for parents. Includes information to set up devices.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>



YouTube

With over 5.5 billion videos, if you need to know something there's a good chance it's here. Use simple searches such as, "What is..." "How do I..."

<https://www.youtube.com>



School

The school your child goes to is a wealth of information. If you're not sure or don't know where to turn to, they can and will help. Find out what your child does in school about online safety so that you can replicate the same advice at home.



Contribute to the magazine

I'm always on the lookout for great content to share with schools and parents, but I also know that people have their own individual stories to tell. This information can be hugely beneficial for everybody.

- Are you a parent who has experienced something with your child? What was it and what did you do? Has your child experienced something and would he/she like to share their advice with others?
- Are you a school that has experienced a series of incidents? How did you tackle this? Do you have an innovative way to engage with specific online safety topics in the school?
- Do you have an opinion or a thought-provoking idea?

Drop me an email and let me know your thoughts. Everything can be kept anonymous if you wish.

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