

Article aimed at young people

Do you know who you're speaking to online?

Staying safe online has never been more important than right now as we're all spending more time on our phones, tablets, laptops and games consoles to stay in touch and keep our spirits up.

There is a risk with social media and games that have a chat option that someone that you don't know could try to contact you, or add you as a friend or request to follow you. Remember, it's ok to ignore their message or decline their request.

Thames Valley Police know that some criminals are using the lockdown to try and make contact with young people online, build up a friendship with them and then encourage them to do things that they don't feel comfortable doing. Not everyone online is who they say they are, so don't befriend people you don't know.

Now is a good time to take a look at the privacy settings of the apps that you use. Check the default settings and make appropriate changes to keep yourself safe when you use them. Advice for over 60 of the most popular apps and games have been created by the NSPCC and O2 and can be found at www.net-aware.org.uk

If you are unsure about someone that you're speaking to or if you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried walk away from your phone or computer and tell an adult immediately. This could be a friend, your parent, one of your teachers, the police or Childline.

You can contact the police on 101 or by going online at www.thamesvalley.police.uk/contact and you can contact Childline by calling 0800 1111 or chat online at www.childline.org.uk