SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Secondary | June 2025

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The issue of pornography

In today's digital world, children and young people are increasingly exposed to online content that may not be age-appropriate—pornography being one of the most concerning.

As part of our commitment to safeguarding and supporting the wellbeing of our young people, we want to help parents and carers understand the risks and how you can protect and support your child.

Why is this important?

Children can come across pornography accidentally, through pop-ups, social media or even on mainstream websites. Others may seek it out due to curiosity or peer pressure.

Early exposure can have serious impacts:

- **unrealistic expectations:** pornography often presents unhealthy and unrealistic portrayals of relationships, consent and bodies.
- **mental health concerns:** it can lead to confusion, anxiety, shame or compulsive behaviours.
- **impact on relationships:** it may affect how young people view intimacy and gender roles.
- **addiction risk:** repeated exposure can become compulsive, impacting learning, relationships and self-esteem.

What if my child has seen pornography?

- **Stay calm:** reacting with anger or shame can close down communication.
- **Ask open questions:** "What did you see?" or "How did it make you feel?"
- **Reassure:** let them know they're not in trouble and you're there to support them.
- **Guide and educate:** use the moment to teach them about healthy relationships, respect and safe online use.

HOW CAN PARENTS AND CARERS SAFEGUARD THEIR CHILD FROM PORNOGRAPHY?

Have open conversations

Talk to your child about healthy relationships, consent and online safety. Create a safe space where they feel able to ask questions.

Use parental controls

Install filters and use built-in controls on devices, browsers and apps to block inappropriate content. Regularly review these settings.

Educate on media literacy

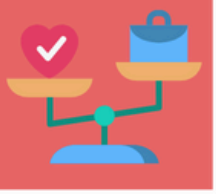
Teach your child to think critically about what they see online. Help them understand the difference between real relationships and harmful portrayals.

Be present online

Know which apps, websites and games your child is using. Use them together when possible, and model healthy digital behaviour.

Encourage balance

Support offline interests—sports, arts, reading—to reduce screen dependency.



If you need further advice and support, here are some helpful resources:

Thinkuknow – age-appropriate advice for children and parents.

NSPCC – support and tips for online safety.

Common Sense Media – reviews and guidance on digital content.

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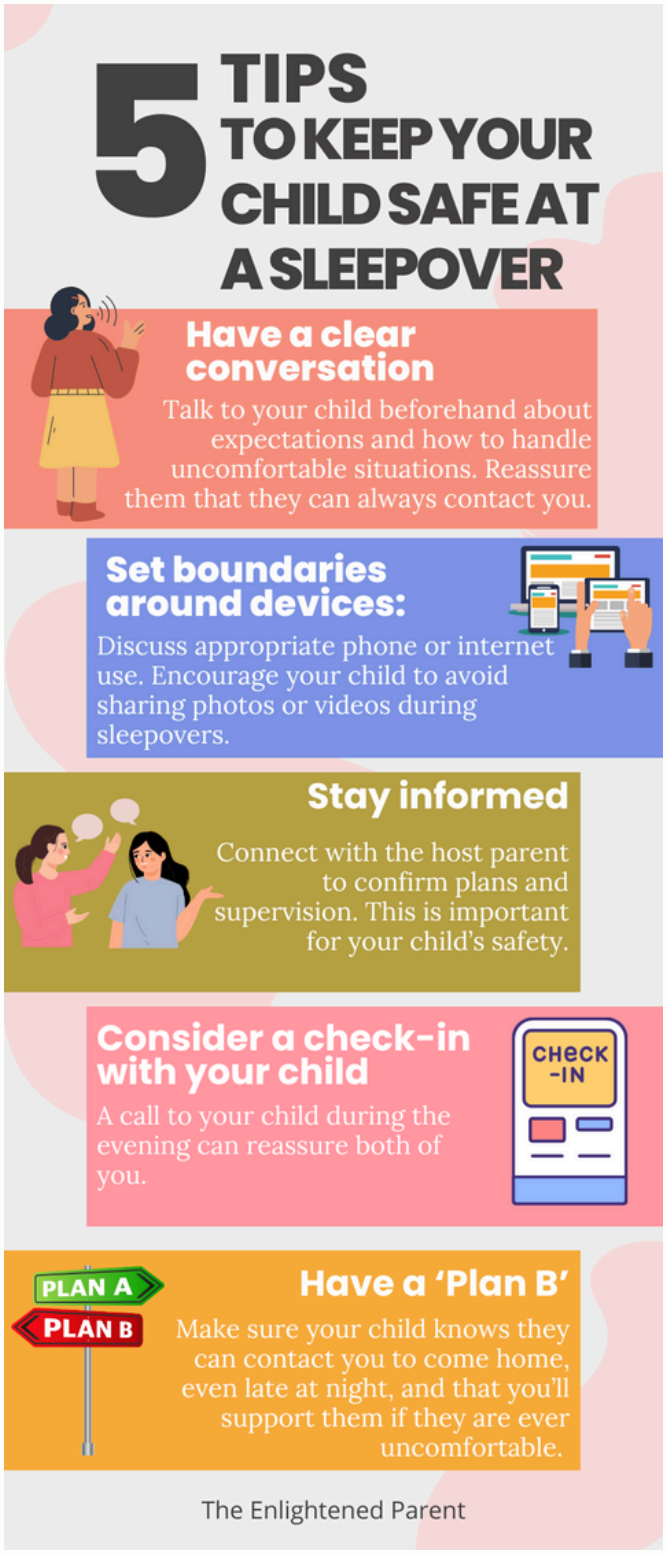
Sleepover safety

As children grow into teenagers, social independence becomes increasingly important. Sleepovers can be a fun and positive part of adolescence, helping to build friendships and social skills. However, it's also important to consider safety, boundaries and communication—especially as children begin to stay overnight in other households.

Why sleepover safety matters

While most sleepovers happen safe and well, there are potential risks to be aware of:

- lack of supervision or unknown adults present
- exposure to inappropriate content or behaviour (e.g. alcohol, pornography, vaping)
- peer pressure or unsafe dares/challenges
- online risks if phones/devices are used without supervision
- emotional safety: conflicts or exclusion among peers.



KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SAYING YES

BEFORE AGREEING TO A SLEEPOVER, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK THE OTHER PARENTS THESE QUESTIONS:

- ✓ **WHO WILL BE SUPERVISING?**
  Will an adult be present all night?
- ✓ **WHO ELSE IS ATTENDING?**
  Will boys and girls be mixed? Are older teens involved? Will there be other visiting adults?
- ✓ **WHAT ARE THE RULES IN THE HOUSEHOLD?**
  E.g. device use, curfews, sleeping arrangements.
- ✓ **HOW CAN YOUR CHILD CONTACT YOU?**
  If they don't have their own phone, are they able to contact you at any point in the evening?

Remember: It's absolutely acceptable to say "no" or "not yet" if you're not comfortable.
Sleepovers can be a positive experience—but only when your child's safety, comfort and your peace of mind are protected.