# Online Safety News
January 2025

YouTube TV app is rolling out "Parent Code" for enhanced child safety

YouTube's new "parent code" feature helps parents control their kids' viewing on smart TVs. This four-digit PIN ensures children can only access appropriate content by requiring the code to:

- Watch YouTube when signed out.
- Switch to older family members' accounts (13+).
- Remove accounts from the TV app.

With YouTube phasing out the Kids app on smart TVs, this feature adds extra protection, addressing concerns about children encountering unsuitable content.

Once available you can set it up by going to the YouTube TV app's "Settings" menu and select "Parent code." The feature started to be rolled out from mid - December.
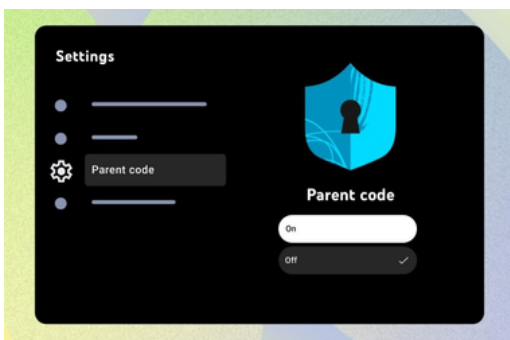
Age Restrictions for Social Media

Many social media apps are rated 13+ This relates to data processing policies that social media companies need to adhere to. Under the COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) Law, social media companies are prohibited from collecting personal information from children under 13 without parental consent.

This includes:
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- Facebook
- WhatsApp

It's important to remember that this is based on data protection laws, not suitability of content. It does not mean that all content is suitable for children aged 13+.

There are minimal age verification steps in place across most social media platforms, making it very easy for children under 13 to create accounts without parents and carers knowledge.

If you are thinking of allowing your child to have social media, it can be a good idea to set up a profile yourself, as a 13year old, and observe the type of content that is served to a child account, before you allow access.

Has your child got a new games console?

Setting up your child's first console is key to creating positive gaming experiences.
Gaming can teach valuable skills like teamwork and problem-solving while keeping them connected with friends but can also come with risks such as chatting with strangers, seeing inappropriate content and excessive screen use and spending money.

Three key areas for parents and carers to be aware of:

- **Communication** - who are they chatting with, gaming with? What chat functions and options are there on the game?
- **Spending** - Many games have the option to enhance or customise the experience through in-app purchases - check settings and agree boundaries.
- **Content** - there can always be a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or harmful content online. Make sure your child knows they can come to you if they experience anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Using parental controls during setup helps ensure they play responsibly and with confidence.

Check out this guide from Internet Matters which explains how to set up Nintendo Switch, Playstation 5 (PS5) and X-Box series safely and securely.

https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/first-video-game-console-guide/

Recommended programs for parents and carers to watch:

In the last few months there have been a couple of powerful programs aired on TV discussing the impact and risks facing children online today. Both these programs are a great way for parents and carers to see another side to the online world that they may not be aware of, but we absolutely need to be.

Swiped: Emma and Matt Willis challenge a group of Year 8 pupils at the Stanway School in Colchester to give up their smartphones completely for 21 days
Available on Channel 4 replay.

Teen Predator: Explores the case of Alexander McCartney sentenced to life imprisonment in October 2024. Spread over three episodes it's not easy watching but if you have a child who is on social media or asking to be then I highly recommend setting aside some time to watch, and process, this.
Available on BBC iPlayer

WARNING!

Are these suitable to watch with children? Primary age - No.
Always watch the program yourself first to understand the content. There is some distressing content in these programs and references to suicide.