Personal safety for children and young people

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Empowering adults to help keep kids safe
Bravehearts dedicates this resource to all survivors of child sexual assault and exploitation and their supporting families, carers and friends.
Our Mission
To prevent child sexual assault and exploitation in our society.

Our Vision
To make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

Our Guiding Principles
To at all times tenaciously pursue our Mission without fear, favour, or compromise and to continually ensure that the best interests, human rights, and protection of the child are placed before all other considerations.

Our Guiding Values
To at all times, act to serve our Mission with uncompromising integrity, respect, energy, and empathy, ensuring fairness, justice, and hope for all children and those who protect them.

The 3 Piers to Prevention
The work of Bravehearts is based on The 3 Piers to Prevention: Educate, Empower, Protect - solid foundations to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

The 3 Piers are:

Educate
- Personal safety education for children.
- Cyber-safety education for children and young people.
- Sexual safety and respectful relationships education for young people.

Empower
- Specialist counselling, support and case management for survivors of child sexual assault and exploitation and their families.
- Child protection training for professionals and community.
- Risk management services for organisations.
- Community engagement and public awareness.

Protect
- Lobbying and legislative reform.
- Research and policy development.
- Reporting schemes.
'Nothing is more important than protecting our kids.'

Hetty Johnston AM
Founder & Executive Director, Bravehearts Foundation
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Introduction

As parents, carers, and trusted adults in our children’s lives, the most important role we have is to keep them safe.

As protectors, we want to shield our children from harm, but the reality is that we cannot be with them 24/7. What we can do however, is build resiliency in our children, which includes teaching them how to identify and respond to unsafe situations.

The first part of this Guide aims to equip you with knowledge on what to look for and what to do when it comes to protecting against child sexual assault.

The second part of this guide aims to provide you with information that will empower you to have conversations with your children and young people about personal safety.

It’s vital that you know what to look for so you can identify signs that may indicate harm has occurred or is occurring. These indicators may present themselves through the things children say or do, as well as physical signs.

When harm (or the risk of harm) has been identified, it’s vital that we respond effectively. Understanding how to respond to a child or young person who discloses harm, as well as who you can go to with your concerns, can improve the long term outcomes for a child or young person at risk.
Statistics about child sexual assault and exploitation

It is important to understand that child sexual assault and exploitation is a crime that can affect not only the child or young person, but their family and broader community as well. Below are some alarming but very real statistics that highlight the prevalence and nature of these crimes:

- **In 70-90% of cases of child sexual assault, the offender is known to the child and the child’s family** (Finkelhor, 1994; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004; National Child Protection Clearinghouse, 2005; Quadara, Nagy, Higgins, & Siegel, 2015; Tarzon & Quadara, 2012).

- **Children rarely lie about sexual abuse** (O’Donohue, Cummings, & Willis, 2018). **In 98% of all child abuse cases reported to officials, children’s statements were found to be true** (NSW Child Protection Council, cited in Dympna House 1998; Oates, Jones, Denson, Sirotnak, Gary & Krugman, 2000).

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) found the average age that abuse started depended on the type of abuse experienced: 8.8 years for children who experienced sexual abuse only; 8.1 years for children who experienced physical abuse only; and 6.8 years for children who experienced both physical and sexual abuse.

- **1 in 5 children will be sexually harmed in some way before their 18th birthday** James, 2000; Price-Robertson, Bromfield and Vassallo, 2010; Mills, Kisely, Alati, Strathearn, & Najman, 2016; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017.

- **Child sexual assault and exploitation is a crime that affects children of all races, economic classes, cultural groups, genders and ages.** (James, 2000).

- **In 2017, 38% of young people in Australia aged 8 to 17 have used the internet to talk to a stranger** (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018).
Below are some common myths that exist around child sexual assault and exploitation and the facts to dispel these myths.

**MYTH Parents are at fault for the sexual assault or exploitation.**

**FACT** Parents often feel guilt and blame themselves for not protecting their child. However, this attitude shifts blame and enables offenders to avoid responsibility for their actions. The offender is always the person who is responsible for the sexual assault or exploitation of the child.

**MYTH The stranger is the danger.**

**FACT** In child sexual assault cases, 70% to 90% of offenders are known to the child and family (Finkelhor, 1994; Mouzous & Makkai, 2004; National Child Protection Clearinghouse, 2005). Beyond this, 90% of child abuse incidents involving neglect, emotional or physical abuse are caused by the parent or primary caregiver.

**MYTH Children with disabilities are less likely to be abused.**

**FACT** Research shows that children and young people with disabilities are up to four times more likely to be abused as they may not have the language or understanding to communicate what is happening to them (World Health Organisation, 2018).

**MYTH Children who are being sexually assaulted or exploited will tell someone immediately.**

**FACT** There can be many barriers to a child disclosing sexual assault or exploitation. Perpetrators work hard at ensuring their victims remain silent, using many different tactics. The result is that a child who is being sexually assaulted or exploited may experience fear, confusion, guilt, shame and sadness, making it difficult for them to disclose.
**MYTH** Only children from low socio-economic backgrounds are vulnerable to sexual harm and exploitation.

**FACT** All children are vulnerable to sexual harm and exploitation regardless of their background.

**MYTH** Children who are sexually assaulted or exploited will hate the perpetrator, so it will be easy to recognise if the child is being harmed.

**FACT** If a child is being sexually assaulted or exploited by a parent, loved-one or caregiver, they will often be confused by the behaviour and struggle with conflicting emotions. A child may still view the perpetrator as a loved one and may not outwardly show any anger or resentment towards them.

**MYTH** Children and young people lie about sexual assault and exploitation.

**FACT** 98% of child sexual assault disclosures are found to true (NSW Child Protection Council, cited in Dympna House 1998; Oates, Jones, Denson, Sirotnak, Gary & Krugman, 2000). Although children may retract their report, this is commonly due to shame, confusion, fear of consequences or other threats that occur after the initial report has been made. It is therefore vital to believe and support the child throughout the entire process.

**MYTH** Children and young people cannot be sexually harmed by other children or young people.

**FACT** Australian studies find that 30-60% of child sexual assault is carried out by other children and young people, and most young people target younger children or peers, and know their victim (Department of Human Services [DHS], 2012; Hunter 1999; KPMG, 2014, p. 22; Weinrott, 1996). Preventing child sexual assault requires us to acknowledge this uncomfortable truth and be aware that it is not only adults who can sexually harm children or young people.

**MYTH** Children can misinterpret and wrongly accuse an adult of sexual assault.

**FACT** Children often disclose long after the assault has started. The offender often uses behaviours such as ‘accidental touching’ or tickling to minimise their behaviour and blame the child. A child’s disclosure should always be acknowledged and believed.

**MYTH** All child sex offenders are male.

**FACT** It is important to be aware there are both male and female child sex offenders. Although prevalence rates are variable, 4.6% to 10.7% of child sexual assault crimes are committed by women (Cortoni & Hanson, 2005; Peter, 2009; Stathopoulos, 2014).

**MYTH** If a child discloses sexual assault or exploitation and then retracts their statement, they must be lying.

**FACT** Pressure is mounted on a child following disclosure. Consequences of disclosures can include family breakdown, parent distress, and other effects. Retracting a statement may be a child’s attempt to return their situation to normal, rather than an indication that they were lying. This is why it is so important that a child is supported and believed after a disclosure is made.
Children and young people of all cultures, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and ages may be sexually assaulted or exploited. Above all else, it is important to pay attention to behavioural changes in your children (particularly if there are several changes in combination), and take them seriously if they disclose.

**Possible indicators of child sexual assault and exploitation**

- Unusual or new fears, sometimes around touch.
- Difficulty concentrating or with memory.
- Eating or sleeping changes.
- Fear of being alone with a particular person.
- Sexual themes in artwork, stories, play etc.
- Showing a knowledge of sexual behaviour beyond their years.
- Bed-wetting or soiling after being toilet trained.
- ‘Acting out’ behaviours (aggression, destructive behaviours, truanting behaviour).
- ‘Acting in’ behaviours (withdrawal from friends and family, depression).
- Vaginal, penile or anal soreness or bleeding.
- Problems with friends and schoolwork.
- Vague symptoms of illness such as headache or tummy ache.
- Self-harm (cutting, risky behaviour).
- Zoning out or not listening.

If you notice any concerning behaviours in your child, try to open up conversation. Try saying: “I’ve noticed you don’t seem yourself lately... you know you can talk to me and I will listen.”

**Potential effects of child sexual assault and exploitation**

Children and young people who have been sexually assaulted or exploited may experience a range of negative impacts in various aspects of their wellbeing, in both the short and long term.

**Potential short term effects**

- Increased illness, body aches or other physical complaints.
- Poor attendance or performance at school.
- Mood changes.
- Regressive behaviours.
- Sleeping and eating disorders.
- Lack of self-esteem.
- Nightmares.
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts or behaviours.
- Self-hatred or reduced self esteem.
- Promiscuous behaviour.
- Aggression.

**Potential long term effects**

- The development of violent or criminal behaviour.
- Self-harm.
- Suicidal ideation and/or attempts.
- Post-traumatic stress.
- Sexual difficulties.
- Inability to form lasting relationships.
- Identity difficulties.
- Developmental delays.
- Alcohol and substance misuse.
Protective factors that may reduce the likelihood of long-term negative effects

It is important to understand that the impacts and effects of child sexual assault and exploitation can be minimised. The following factors help to reduce the likelihood that a child or young person will experience long-term negative effects from the harm.

- **Affirming the child:** making sure the child understands that the sexual assault or exploitation was not their fault and that they are believed.
- **Safety:** steps have been taken to help protect the child or young person.
- **Protective adults:** adults in the child or young person’s support network have acted to protect them from further harm.

- **Attachment:** the child has a safe and secure attachment with at least one parent, caregiver or other adult.
- **Family environment:** family members are supported and there are positive relationships between family members.
- **Child’s individual factors:** positive thinking style, resilience, use of positive coping strategies, feels empowered and supported, and has a high self-esteem.

Children who are supported and believed when they speak out are less likely to endure long-term negative impacts (for more on how to respond to a disclosure of child sexual assault or exploitation, please see page 13).
Recognising and responding to grooming

What is grooming?

Most cases of child sexual assault and exploitation are planned. The process by which a person prepares the child, family and environment for child sexual assault and exploitation is called grooming.

The offender aims to gain access to the child or young person as well as gain their compliance and ensure they remain silent. Therefore, the offender will not only manipulate the child, but also may attempt to manipulate the family, friends and wider community or institution. Having an awareness of the signs of grooming and the factors that increase a child’s vulnerability can help with prevention.

Grooming behaviours

Certain behaviours may indicate grooming. It is important to be aware of the following indicators or red flags:

- **Intimidation or secrecy**: encourages silence and secrets in children and young people.
- **Favouritism**: pays particular interest to a child, e.g. gift giving, singling them out, praise and making them feel ‘special’.
- **Boundary violation**: engages in close, inappropriate contact that may gradually increase over time.
- **Uses sexual words**: describes children with sexual words or talks about sexual activity involving children.
- **Isolation**: makes the child feel isolated from family or friends and/or takes a child away from public gaze.
- **Demonstrates more interest in children and young people than adults**: spends a significant amount of their spare time with a child/young person and shows little interest in spending time with someone their own age.

**IMPORTANT**: If you think your child (or a child you know) is being groomed or you are worried about red flags, please report to Police on 000 or child protective services (details on page 26 of this booklet). You may also wish to contact Bravehearts on 1800 272 831 if you are unsure or want advice.
Responding to disclosures or suspected harm

Below is a brief overview of how to respond if a child or young person discloses they are being, or have been sexually harmed. Whether it is your own child or a child you know, your response to any disclosure of harm (or potential harm) can be the first important step in protecting the child from further harm.

**Remember: Disclosing is difficult and brave**

It is important to understand how difficult it can be for a child to disclose sexual harm. Offenders put a great deal of time and effort into ensuring the child remains silent. Reasons a child may have trouble disclosing include:

- They think they will get into trouble.
- They feel guilty or ashamed.
- They feel that no one will believe them.
- The offender may be someone they heavily rely on (such as a parent or caregiver).
- They don’t want the offender to get into trouble.

**What to do if a child or young person discloses sexual assault or exploitation to you**

If a child or young person discloses to you, try to follow these steps:

- Listen carefully to all they say.
- Tell them you believe them and it’s not their fault.
- Let them know you will do everything in your power to help them, but do not make promises that you may not have any control over or be able to keep.
- Let the child know that you will need to tell someone to help keep them safe. Though this may upset the child, it is very important that you act protectively and in the child’s best interest.
- Reiterate that you are there for them and they can talk to you at any time.

**What if you suspect a child or young person is being harmed?**

Sometimes a child or young person’s behaviour or words may lead you to suspect that child is unsafe or being harmed (see page 10). In this situation, it is important to:

- Not frighten the child or young person by asking confronting or direct questions.
- Let the child or young person know that you are there for them if they ever need to talk.
- Record your concerns including any behavioural observations or conversations you may have had with the child or young person.
- Report your concerns as soon as practically possible (see page 26 for contact list).
- If at any time you believe a child is in immediate danger, please call 000.

**IMPORTANT:**

- Let the child use their own words.
- Avoid using closed (questions that only require yes or no answers) or leading questions (i.e. “Did he touch you on your private parts?”). Instead, try and use OPEN questions. For example: ‘...then what happened?’, ‘tell me more about that...’
- Be patient and calm.
- Reassure them it’s not their fault.
- Reassure them it’s OK they have told you.
- Explain that you will need to report this information to someone else to keep them safe.
- Report as soon as possible.
Why teach your child personal safety?

Research shows that teaching children about personal safety:

• Reduces the likelihood of a child being caught up in an unsafe situation.
• Clearly demonstrates how to respond to an unsafe situation.
• Increases a child’s sense of confidence and in doing so increases their resiliency.
• Increases a child’s knowledge of their personal rights i.e. “I have the right to feel safe with people”.
• Increases the likelihood that the child will speak out if they feel unsafe and tell someone they trust.
• May interrupt or prevent grooming.

Teaching children personal safety can start at any age. Age-appropriate education can include the use of resources such as songs, posters and worksheets.

Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show

Bravehearts’ Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show (DKSA) is a 35-minute, live, interactive personal safety education program for children aged 3 to 8 that uses music and movement, and is delivered by Ditto the friendly lion cub and an education facilitator.

DKSA was developed by Bravehearts’ team of psychologists, teachers, counsellors, and criminologists, and in collaboration with child protection experts across the country. Working with schools and childcare centres, DKSA has been educating children since 2006.

Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure DVD

Bravehearts developed a DVD version of the live Ditto show for children to watch at home with their parents. The DVD is particularly engaging for young children and a great way to introduce personal safety messages.

The Ditto DVD consists of six chapters that each explore an element of personal safety. These are:

• Differentiating ‘yes’ and ‘no’ feelings;
• Recognising the body’s ‘warning signs’;
• Identifying ‘private parts’ and ‘privacy’;
• Helping children identify language and feelings associated with secrets;
• Reinforcing that there is no secret that children cannot tell someone;
• What to do if you feel unsafe or unsure.

The DVD uses age-appropriate, non-confrontational, and simple language. Although Bravehearts recommends and supports the use of anatomical names, we do not use anatomical names throughout the show or DVD, instead referring only to ‘private parts’ (mouth, chest, bottom, between the legs). This allows parents to introduce anatomical names to their children at a time they see fit.
Ditto’s 3 Rules and Helper Plan

Encapsulating the key learning points of the program are Ditto’s 3 Rules:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.
2. It’s OK to say ‘NO’ if you feel unsafe or unsure.
3. Nothing is so yucky that you can’t tell someone about it.

Repetition helps young children when they are learning something new. Therefore, going over Ditto’s 3 Rules together regularly and singing the songs from the show, will make it easier for your child to learn and retain the information.

Reflected in Ditto’s Rule number 3 and explored throughout the program is the very important personal safety concept of identifying trusted adults - people the child feels safe to talk to if they ever feel unsafe or unsure.

We have provided Ditto’s Helper Plan as an activity in this guide for you to work through with your child (see page 21). This will help them identify several trusted adults they can talk to.

Revisiting Ditto’s Rules and the Helper Plan will provide opportunities for you to have a discussion with your child around keeping safe. Regularly checking in and asking how your child is feeling and what is going on for them helps to keep open the lines of communication, reinforcing that you are there for your child no matter how yucky something may seem. It is also a great opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have including any changes in their behaviour you may have noticed.

Watching the DVD and working together at home with your child on the following activities will make teaching your child personal safety a fun experience for you both!
ACTIVITY: Ditto’s 3 Rules

Work with your child while they colour in the three activity worksheets and write the names of, or draw people that give them a ‘yes’ (safe) feeling. Then, recap Ditto’s 3 Rules together and discuss each rule with your child.

Display the rules when they have been coloured in a place at home where they can be seen and recalled together.

**RULE 1** We all have the right to feel safe with people: Kids have the right to feel safe and secure where they live, play, and learn with the people that surround them. This means feeling unsafe or feeling that someone could hurt them at anytime.

**RULE 2** It’s OK to say ‘NO’ if you feel unsafe or unsure: It can be difficult for some children to speak up confidently and say ‘no’ if someone is making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. This rule teaches kids that it is OK to stand up for themselves and to be assertive if something doesn’t feel right.

**RULE 3** Nothing is so yucky that you can’t tell someone about it: Encourage your child to speak to a trusted adult, even if something seems scary or terrible. This rule also leads well into the Helper Plan activity and the safety support network.

**QUICK TIPS**

- Watch the Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure DVD on your own before watching with your child. This will give you an understanding of the content.
- If you have personally experienced child sexual assault or exploitation, this may be triggering. The best thing you can do for your child and yourself is to talk to someone who can help. Please call Bravehearts’ Support Line on 1800 272 831 for information and advice.
- We never want to scare or alarm children. Speak calmly and confidently, keeping a neutral, natural tone, ensuring that you have time to allow your child to process the information and ask questions.
- Never make a child feel ashamed or embarrassed about sexuality or body parts.
- Know that speaking with your child about personal safety should not be a one-off conversation. Create opportunities that allow talking about personal safety to be an ongoing dialogue. Always let your child know you are there for them and keeping them safe and protecting them is your number one priority.
- Remember that most adults are safe. Talking to children about personal safety is about empowering them to be safe, not scaring them.
Ditto’s Rule 1

We all have the right to feel safe with people.
It’s ok to say ‘NO’ if you feel unsafe or unsure.
Ditto’s Rule 3

Nothing is so yucky that you can’t tell someone about it.
The Helper Plan is an activity sheet (on the next page) to work through with your child to help them identify their support network. This activity should be revisited regularly in case a person on the plan has a change of circumstance. In addition, it is a good idea to revisit the details to help the child remember.

Support networks are important to establish who the child feels comfortable with, trusts, and is happy to speak to, but it also provides contacts of official organisations that can help.

Children need time to speak about ‘trust’ and who they trust with their special or private information.

In our education program, we have used the following definition for trust as an example:

*Trust is something we feel when we know somebody will do the right thing to protect us, help us, support us, or care for us and we feel safe.*

During this activity, allow the child time to think about who they would like to nominate. Encourage them to find a safe place to keep Ditto’s Helper Plan when it’s complete and be sure to review it with your child every few months.
Ditto’s Helper Plan

To fill in this Helper Plan, use the names of people that make you feel safe.

Who can help?

School

Safe Adult

Family

Safe Adult

Bravehearts
1800 272 831

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

FOR EMERGENCY ONLY
Police
000
Keeping children and young people safe online

Today more than ever, children and young people are learning, interacting, and communicating in an online world. There are so many positives for children and young people online and we do not want to scare them. We do however, want them to know that just like in the face-to-face world, the online world does require them to take care.

Online safety is one of the biggest issues we face in child protection. More than 1 in 4 Australian 11-16 year olds say they are in communication with people they first met online, unconnected with their offline social networks (Green et al, 2011). This means that children and young people are developing friendships and relationships with people they have never met face-to-face.

Australian police have seen an increase in reports of “self-produced child exploitation material”. In some instances, children are willingly sharing photos of themselves, including inappropriate or naked pictures on social media. In other cases, sex offenders are reaching out to children through social media platforms and coercing them into sharing inappropriate or naked pictures of themselves, which are secretly captured and shared in the darkest corners of the internet (Alarming rise in ‘self-produced child abuse material’ sparks online safety warnings, abc.net.au, 2017).

With this in mind, it is just as important to talk about online personal safety with your children as it is personal safety in the offline world. Below are tips for keeping children of all ages safe online.

Pre-school aged children

This age group is just beginning to learn how computers, phones and other devices work and the joy they can bring. This includes visiting children’s websites and helping them compose emails to family and friends.

Be sure to sit with your child during this learning stage when they are on a computer or device and choose websites, games and apps that are suitable for your child’s age group - even games and apps that are designed for young children have features that enable communication with strangers.

JOIN THE DOTS is Bravehearts’ online reporting tool designed for children and young people to anonymously report unsafe or creepy online behaviour. Show your child or young person the Join the Dots website and how to use it. Go to: bravehearts.org.au/join-the-dots

QUICK TIPS

Making your devices safer for kids:

- Familiarise yourself with all sites, games and apps your child uses and check the privacy settings on these.
- Install safety and security software and keep it updated; use internet and spam filters and pop-up stoppers.
- Install monitoring software and monitor downloads to your device.
- Frequently check browsing history.

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Primary school aged children

Children of this age feel more confident using the internet and may wish to start using social media. Children may also try to search for prohibited material and notice marketing material, wanting to purchase products online.

Ensure computers and other devices are used in a common area in the home where you can keep an eye on your child, rather than in private (i.e. their bedroom). Stay within earshot of your child and have a pre-determined plan of action if they stumble across something inappropriate (e.g. turn the device face down and tell a trusted adult).

Similarly, have an agreed plan with your child if a stranger tries to communicate with them online and remind your child repeatedly and often of the fact that not everyone is who they say they are online.

Young people

Teenagers will want more independence and freedom while using the internet. Their use of social media will grow as will their network of online ‘friends’.

This age group may also try to explore prohibited material. While it is more difficult to keep tight supervision on what teenagers are doing online, it is vital that you stay in touch with them and talk often about safe internet use, the risks and how to avoid them.

Social media

On social media, children and young people tend to interact with more confidence than they normally would in a face-to-face situation. This can make them susceptible to cyber-stalkers who can skilfully pretend to be someone they are not, online grooming and bullying.

In this space more than ever, children and young people need to know they should never give out personal information such as their full name, date of birth, address, phone number, school or bank details.

As a parent, it is important for you to have current information about the types of social media platforms that children and young people are using. Ensure you are aware of the age-restrictions on these platforms (many have 15+ age restrictions) and understand that the platforms that you are using may be very different to those that your children are using.

For more information on social networking and how to keep your children and young people safe, please see the Office of the eSafety Commissioner website: esafety.gov.au/parents

Consider drawing up an Online Safety Family Contract. For advice on how to do this, go to: bravehearts.org.au/what-we-do/education-and-training/for-parents/keeping-safe-online/
Important things to teach your children of young people about online safety

• Keep private information such as your full name, address, phone number, and school to yourself.
• Keep photos of yourself private.
• Keep any credit card and bank details to yourself.
• Only meet up with friends who you know offline.
• Don’t talk to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.
• Be careful of who you talk to on social media.
• Tell your parents or carer if someone says something to you online that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
• Stay away from websites that are not meant for children.
• Remember that people are not always who they seem or say they are online.

Online gaming

Children and young people are increasingly interacting online via online gaming platforms. While there may be many positive aspects to online gaming, it is also important to be aware of the risks.

One of the biggest risks in terms of child safety is the potential for interaction with strangers via these games. Networked games involve multiple players (in some cases even hundreds or thousands of players). With these games, your child or young person could be communicating with strangers (including adults) through web cam, private messaging or online chat, increasing the risk of contact from predators (www.esafety.gov.au, 2018).

A study by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2017) found that when it comes to online gaming, 52% of children played with people they didn’t know. Statistics such as this suggest that it is vital for parents to place safeguards around their children and young people when it comes to online gaming and educate them about interacting safely online.

For the most up-to-date information about online gaming and keeping children and young people safe, please refer to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner website: esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/gaming

Smartphones

Smartphones have access to the internet, which makes it impossible to supervise a child’s internet usage at all times unless you place a block on the phone.

For young children, it is recommended that you do place a block on the phone to stop your child freely accessing the internet. This will ensure they do not stumble across anything inappropriate for their age.

When buying a child or young person a mobile phone, make sure the device you purchase is appropriate for their age and experience.

Important things to teach your children of young people about online safety

• Keep private information such as your full name, address, phone number, and school to yourself.
• Keep photos of yourself private.
• Keep any credit card and bank details to yourself.
• Only meet up with friends who you know offline.
• Don’t talk to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.
• Be careful of who you talk to on social media.
• Tell your parents or carer if someone says something to you online that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
• Stay away from websites that are not meant for children.
• Remember that people are not always who they seem or say they are online.
• Educate yourself: Check out different sites, games and apps for yourself. The more familiar you are with them, the easier it is for you to talk to your children. Check privacy settings and recommended age restrictions.

• Talk with your children: Have conversations with them about the importance of safety online and show them how to implement this. For example, let them know you have been hearing about online safety and ask what they think the risks are and what they can do to keep safe.

• Teach your children to think about online behaviour: How much should they be sharing online and what happens to information once posted or shared? Talk about respectful interactions and responsible behaviour, and encourage them to critically think about what they read and see online (remind them that not everything they read may be true, what they share will always be there, and that not everyone is who they say they are online).

• Come up with a plan around safety: Talk about ways to not only stay safe, but also how to respond to anything that happens that may concern them. Let them know they can talk to you or another adult they can trust. Encourage them to be proactive by accessing information on safety, for example, through Bravehearts’ Join the Dots website bravehearts.org.au/join-the-dots or the eSafety Commission website esafety.gov.au.
## Child Protection Services contact list

If a child is in immediate danger or risk, phone 000. If you wish to report concerns that a child is being sexually harmed, including grooming of a child, please report to Policelink on 131 444

Please note: The URLs given in the list below are current as of March 2020.

### Australian Capital Territory

**Office for Children, Youth and Family**  
(Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services) *mandated reporters*  
Phone: 1300 556 729 or 1300 556 728  
communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs

### South Australia

**Department for Child Protection**  
Phone: 131 478  
childprotection.sa.gov.au

### Tasmania

**Child Protection Services (Department of Health and Human Services)**  
Phone: 1300 737 639  
dhhs.tas.gov.au

### Victoria

**Health and Human Services (Families and Children)**  
Phone: 131 278  
services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/families-and-children

### Western Australia

**Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support**  
Phone: 08 9222 2555 (b/h)  
or 1800 199 008 (a/h)  
dcp.wa.gov.au

### New South Wales

**Department of Community Services**  
Phone: 132 111  
community.nsw.gov.au

### Northern Territory

**Territory Families**  
Phone: 1800 700 250  
territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au

### Queensland

**Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women**  
Phone: 1800 811 810 (b/h)  
or 1800 177 135 (a/h)  
childsafety.qld.gov.au
Additional helpful resources

The following resources may be useful for parents with young children to help teach personal safety. All these resources can be purchased from Bravehearts’ website: bravehearts.org.au/shop/resources

**Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Parent Packs (0-4 years and 5-8 years)**

 Bravehearts’ parent and carer packs contain resources to assist parents or carers with educating their children about personal safety. The packs contains: Parents Guide; Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show DVD; 3 full colour posters displaying Ditto’s 3 Rules; Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Activity Book; and Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Music CD.

**Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure songs (CDs)**

The music that accompanies and supports Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show is available in two different CDs with adapted musical styles for younger children in their early years (0-4 years) and lower primary (5-8 years).

**Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Activity Booklet**

A personal safety activity book for young children that reinforces key messages from the Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show. This book works well with adult support and guided discussion on how young children can make safe choices and who to talk to when they feel unsafe or unsure.

**Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show DVD**

Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show DVD is designed to educate and empower young children (aged 3-8 years) with personal safety, using developmentally-appropriate, child-friendly language in an engaging and interactive style.

**Storybooks about personal safety**

For extra assistance in teaching your child personal safety strategies, two storybooks are available - *Ben and the Babysitter* and *Becky and the Doctor*.

**Parent information, downloadable resources and advice**

Bravehearts’ website - bravehearts.org.au - has a wealth of information and tip sheets about child sexual assault, exploitation and personal safety.
REFERENCES


Personal stuff needs protection
Be careful of your privacy settings, what you share and who you share it with to protect your identity online.

You can only really know someone if you know them IRL
Real-life interactions are still essential to really get to know and trust someone.

Not everyone online is who they say they are
It’s easy to create a false identity and be anonymous online. It’s not always easy to spot a fake, so be careful who you trust online.

What you share will always be there
The internet is a public space so make sure you check and think before sending, posting, sharing or messaging.

If something doesn’t feel right, tell a trusted adult
A trusted adult can advise you on how to deal with suspicious, difficult, unsettling or dangerous things you may see online.
Hi! I'm Ditto the lion cub. I teach kids about keeping safe. I have 3 RULES to teach you. Do you think you can learn them by heart? Let's see!

**Rule 1**
We all have the right to feel safe with people.

**Rule 2**
It’s OK to say “NO!” if you feel unsafe or unsure.

**Rule 3**
Nothing is so yucky that you can’t tell someone about it.

Ditto says...
If you ever feel **UNSAFE or UNSURE**, you should **RUN and TELL** someone you can trust.

Bravehearts
Educate Empower Protect Our Kids

bravehearts.org.au  Information & Support Line 1800 272 831 (Mon to Fri 8:30am - 4:30pm)
MY LOCAL POLICE NUMBER IS:

FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY DIAL:

000

NATIONAL NUMBER FOR NON-EMERGENCY REPORTING TO POLICE:

131 444

NAMES AND NUMBERS OF 4 ADULTS I CAN TRUST: