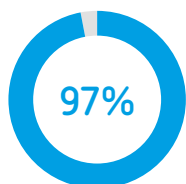




Safer Internet Day provides a brilliant opportunity to discuss online safety with children and young people, and encourage them to think about how being online has changed our day to day lives. In the course of any discussions about how they use the internet, it is possible that children and young people may make disclosures about things they have seen or experienced online.



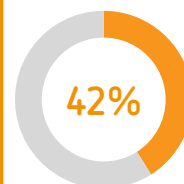
From a survey of teachers who participated in Safer Internet Day

97%

said that it encouraged conversations about the safe use of the internet between teachers and pupils

42%

said it led to disclosures of potential safeguarding issues online



In the event of a disclosure, it's important to handle these sensitively and to follow your school or setting's safeguarding procedures.

### Handling sensitive topics

Some discussions or questions which young people raise might not feel appropriate for the session or may need more consideration before answering. In these cases you may wish to use one of the following techniques to pause the discussion:

**'Save it for later'** – Display a question wall or box in which questions, themes, or topics which may not be appropriate for that lesson, can be saved for future lessons or follow up discussions.

**'Oops and ouch'** – This method can be used if young people are discussing controversial issues which have the potential to cause offense. Anyone who finds a comment offensive or worrying can respond with 'ouch' and the speaker follows on by saying 'oops' and is given an opportunity to further explain their viewpoint. This method helps to avoid misunderstandings or possible resentment to form.

**'Time out'** – You could call a 'time out' when young people are showing signs of fatigue and/or stress; this will provide them with a brief break and can give you an opportunity to take stock of the situation and decide how to proceed.

**'Pause and park'** – You may wish to hit the pause button on particular discussions and 'park' them until a later date. Try to give the young people an idea of when this discussion will be 'unpaused.' This might be after the lesson, during a break or after discussion with another member of staff.

When needing to provide a response, consider the context in which a question was asked. Consider different ways to respond such as: a short, simple answer to the class/group, answering them privately after the lesson/activity or valuing the question but explain it goes beyond the lesson's/activity's learning objectives and that you can talk about it another time. You may also wish to have an anonymous question box available for learners to ask more sensitive questions.

### Responding to a disclosure

Here are some important things to consider in the event of a disclosure:

- If you are worried about a child for any reason then it is important to tell someone straight away, if possible, your school/setting's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a senior colleague.
- Ensure that you are familiar with reporting procedures in your school/setting and that confidentiality is not promised to the child in question.
- Report immediately to the designated person, for example the DSL, so that the correct steps are taken from the start.
- Ensure that the child's own words are used and are not changed in any way; avoid asking leading questions.
- A calm and non-judgemental approach is key if a child comes to you with a disclosure, particularly if it is about a sensitive issue.
- The child in question may want to accompany you when you make your report, to be part of the process. They may explicitly ask to do this or you can ask them if they want to be involved.

### Further advice

The **UK Safer Internet Centre's 'Need Help?'** page contains further information on reporting specific concerns to organisations outside of your school/setting.

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help)

The **Professionals Online Safety Helpline** is a free helpline offering advice and support to all members of the children's workforce on any online safety issues, including gaming, grooming, cyberbullying, sexting, inappropriate behaviour on social media and more. The helpline is available Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm.

0344 381 4772

[helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline)