**How can I help my child use their mobile phone safely?**

Parent advice on children and Mobile Phones

Safety precautions which you have set on the real world should be adapted and set to their mobile.

**Parental settings** – some mobile phone service providers allow you to set certain controls over your child’s phone. This can include, blocking access to certain sites and monitoring your child’s activities. When buying a mobile, speak to the sales representative to find out more about what services they offer. You can find out more about what controls are available looking at ‘parents’ sections online, here are a few to get you started:

* [**Vodafone**](http://parents.vodafone.com/mobile)
* [**O2**](http://www.o2.co.uk/parents)
* [**T mobile**](http://www.t-mobile.co.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents/)
* [**Orange**](http://www1.orange.co.uk/safety/)

**Loopholes** – even if you have set controls, your child may be accessing the internet through other sources. Many phones can access the internet through Wifi, which could be available on your street and picked up for free. Accessing someone else’s Wifi may mean that your safety settings no longer apply.

**Understand what your child’s phone can do** – all phones are different and you need to know what they are capable of so you can manage the risks.

**Set a pin code on your child’s phone** – setting a pin code is like a password. Without a password, others may use your child’s phone. This could enable them to access personal information, online accounts or run up expensive bills.

**Set boundaries and monitor usage** – this doesn’t mean spying on your child! You can set rules with your child about where it is used and how long for. For example, if you don’t want your child to use their mobile at night, why not only charge it overnight in the living room?

**Discuss what they can share** – teach your child to think before they share online and the consequence of doing this over the mobile phone, such as [**sharing their location**](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Primary/Growing-up-online/Sharing/).

**Discuss and monitor costs** – phones can be expensive. As well as bills, costs can be run up through downloading apps, music or leaving data-roaming on abroad. Your child should be made aware of the financial responsibility that comes with owning a phone. There are different ways to manage costs, such having a contract or pay-as-you-go deals, make sure you discuss this in the shop.

**Keep their mobile** **number private** – children need to understand that their phone number should only be given to people they know and trust, make sure that if they are concerned, they ask you first.

**Be prepared in case the phone is lost or stolen –** Know who to contact to get the SIM card blocked.Every phone has a unique ‘IMEI’ number, make sure you write this down so if the phone is stolen, the police can identify the phone if they find it. You can get this by dialling \*#06#.