

# AI & ONLINE SAFETY

## A Guide

### Positive impacts of the online world:

The online world has had a profoundly positive impact on society, offering unprecedented access to information, education, and global communication. It enables people to connect instantly across continents, share ideas, and build supportive communities. For learners of all ages, it provides vast resources and opportunities for skill development. Businesses benefit from greater reach and efficiency, while individuals can access services, entertainment, and support with ease. Overall, the online world enhances connectivity, inclusivity, and innovation in everyday life.

### Importance of online safety:

Online safety is essential to protect individuals - especially children and vulnerable people - from potential risks such as cyberbullying, exploitation, identity theft, and exposure to harmful content. As the digital world becomes more integrated into daily life, it's vital to understand how to navigate it responsibly and securely. Practising online safety helps maintain privacy, build digital resilience, and ensure that the internet remains a positive, empowering space for learning, connection, and creativity.

### Online resilience:

Online resilience is the ability to recognise, manage, and recover from negative experiences in the digital world, helping individuals stay safe and confident online. It is strengthened through the development of technical, media, and social literacy. Technical literacy enables users to understand and use digital tools safely and effectively; media literacy helps them critically evaluate the content they see and share; and social literacy supports respectful and responsible online interactions. Together, these skills empower individuals - especially children and young people - to navigate the online world with confidence, respond to challenges appropriately, and seek support when needed.

### What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the development of computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence. These tasks include learning, problem-solving, understanding language, recognising images or speech, and making decisions. AI is used in many everyday technologies, such as voice assistants, online recommendations, translation tools, and even in education and healthcare. As AI continues to evolve, it offers exciting opportunities - but also highlights the importance of understanding how it works and using it responsibly.

### What are the risks?

The online world, while full of benefits, also presents a range of risks that users need to be aware of. These include exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, online grooming, scams, and misinformation. A growing concern is gendered harms, where individuals - often girls and women - face abuse, harassment, or exploitation based on their gender. This can include sexist trolling, image-based abuse, and coercive behaviours that reinforce harmful stereotypes. Such risks can affect mental health, safety, and confidence online. Recognising these dangers and promoting respectful, inclusive digital spaces is essential to ensuring everyone can benefit safely from the online world.

### Support:

There is a wide range of support available to help children, young people, and adults navigate the online world safely. Trusted organisations offer advice, resources, and tools to build digital resilience and respond to online risks. One valuable resource is [www.kidsonlineworld.com](http://www.kidsonlineworld.com), which provides clear, accessible guidance for families, educators, and professionals on how to support safe and positive online experiences. Other sources of support include school safeguarding teams, helplines such as Childline and the NSPCC, and platforms like CEOP for reporting concerns. Encouraging open conversations and knowing where to turn for help is key to staying safe and supported online.

