

**21st July 2016**

**Dear Parent/Carer**

**Pokémon Go – Online Safety Advice**

Following recent enquiries from schools and settings regarding safety concerns about the 'Pokémon Go' app, the Education Safeguarding Adviser (Online Protection) and e-Safety Development Officer have collated a list of useful links for schools and settings to share with parents/carers. These links explore the Pokémon Go app in more depth and provide practical advice for parents/carers on how to keep children safe when playing.

**What is Pokémon Go?**

Pokémon Go is a game where users can collect and trade creatures called Pokémon (Pocket Monsters). It uses 'augmented reality' (AR) to make it look like Pokémon have appeared in real life places by using the GPS and cameras on phones/devices. In the game players can collect Pokémon by walking around their local community to capture them as they appear. They can also visit 'PokeStops' to collect new items and visit 'gyms' to train their Pokémon and compete. PokeStops and Gyms are located in public places.

**What should we be aware of if using Pokémon Go?**

There are a range of risks for Pokémon Go players which have been featured in the global media which includes physical safety concerns (people walking into secluded, dangerous or busy areas), stranger danger (users may feel encouraged to speak to and meet strangers when collecting Pokémon), in-app purchasing (using real money to buy virtual goods), privacy risks (access to personal data), age restrictions (users under 13 require parental consent), data use implications (the game uses mobile data to access maps) and the impact on battery life (the game can quickly drain battery which could mean users are unable to use their device).

It is however important to be aware that the potential risks identified are not new risks to children (or indeed adults who may play the game) either online or in the "real" world so in most cases the response will be to ensure that players understand how to keep safe and for parents/carers to ensure that appropriate support and supervision is in place for children when using the app. Arguably the game brings many benefits such as encouraging children and families to be active and social and some reports suggest it may have benefits to mental as well as physical health.

If parents/carers are engaged with their children's internet use then the potential risks can be minimised and managed appropriately through regular discussions and appropriate supervision. Pokémon Go can provide a useful way for parents (and indeed schools) to explore important on and offline safety messages and reinforce safe behaviours.

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As long as appropriate safety steps are taken, Pokémon Go could be viewed as an opportunity to engage in a fun family activity which encourages children and parents to go out together and be active and explore their communities in new and engaging ways.

### **Links for schools/settings to share with parents/carers**

The following links may be helpful for schools and settings to share with their parents to help families ensure that Pokémon Go is kept fun and safe.

- [www.saferinternet.org.uk/news/pokemon-go-gaming-gone-mobile](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/news/pokemon-go-gaming-gone-mobile)
- [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/pokemon-go-parents-guide/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/pokemon-go-parents-guide/)
- [www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/pokemon-go-mobile-game-what-parents-need-to-know/](http://www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/pokemon-go-mobile-game-what-parents-need-to-know/)
- [www.lifehacker.com/a-parent-s-guide-to-playing-pokemon-go-with-your-kids-1783525769](http://www.lifehacker.com/a-parent-s-guide-to-playing-pokemon-go-with-your-kids-1783525769)
- [www.webwise.ie/parents/5-things-parents-need-know-pokemon-go/](http://www.webwise.ie/parents/5-things-parents-need-know-pokemon-go/)
- [www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/Pok%C3%A9mon-go](http://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/Pok%C3%A9mon-go)
- [www.thecybersafetylady.com.au/2016/07/pokemon-go-tips-for-parents/](http://www.thecybersafetylady.com.au/2016/07/pokemon-go-tips-for-parents/)
- [www.forbes.com/sites/andyrobertson/2016/07/18/how-families-must-avoid-pokemon-gos-dangerous-pitfalls/#94b48917dad6](http://www.forbes.com/sites/andyrobertson/2016/07/18/how-families-must-avoid-pokemon-gos-dangerous-pitfalls/#94b48917dad6)

Yours faithfully

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