



# Devon & Cornwall Police

## Building safer communities together

# TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY!

## Festive safety suggestions for parents, guardians and carers

### Keeping track of your children

Chances are young people are going to be spending time with their friends over the holidays. Bearing in mind the weather and dark evenings, we recommend agreeing some boundaries together about keeping track of time. There's little worse than not knowing where your child is or if they're safe. If they're going out agree together that they will let you know where they're going, who they're going to be with and what time they will be home. If your child has a mobile phone, ask them to keep in touch with you especially if they're going to be late home for any reason. You might also want to share contact details with the parents and guardians of your child's friends, that way you can always be contacted if you need to be and you can contact them if you're worried for any reason. If your children are older and they are going out to pubs and clubs, please make sure they make safe plans to get home. Sharing a taxi with a stranger to save money is not a good idea.

### Technology choices

Have you been nagged about buying a new smart phone, tablet or perhaps games for the consoles?!! If you are buying devices such as these for your children, please ensure that you also invest time to ensure that your children are protected from the risks of the online environment. Check out how to put on parental controls on devices to ensure that they are not exposed to information that is not age appropriate.

As it's the holiday your child might be spending more time than usual online, which might include gaming and social networking. If your child has a games console or is playing games online we recommend you check out the PEGI website. PEGI labels are used on games to show the type of content a game might contain. The labels also provide age ratings which can help you make sure that the game your child is playing is appropriate.



Certain games will feature adult content such as bad language, sex, violence, sexual violence, discrimination and drugs and will **not** be suitable for children. You can find out what the labels mean on the PEGI website [www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/](http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/).

Many gaming devices enable children and young people to play online against people they know, and people they don't know. Online as well as playing games people can also often speak with each other through instant

messaging or live chat sometimes using a microphone and headphones. Although gaming can be great fun, it's important to find a balance between having a good time and staying safe.

For general advice about protecting you and your family online check out the following websites

[www.getsafeonline.org/about-us/](http://www.getsafeonline.org/about-us/)

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

## Legal Highs

'Legal Highs' are substances which can produce similar effects to illegal drugs. They cannot be sold for human consumption so are often sold as other things like plant food. The term 'Legal High' is in itself confusing as many people think that if something is legal, it is safe. Legal Highs are **NOT** safe as it's difficult to know what exactly is actually contained in the substance, or what effect it will have on someone.

Please remind your children if they are offered any tablets or other unknown substances they can be extremely dangerous and the safest advice is not to take them. If they do take anything and become unwell they need to seek help quickly to promote recovery.

To find out more about Legal Highs visit the Talk to Frank website [www.talktofrank.com/drug/legal-highs](http://www.talktofrank.com/drug/legal-highs). If you're worried about a child in terms of Legal Highs or any other drugs the Talk to Frank website has good information for parents and carers at [www.talktofrank.com/worried-about-a-child](http://www.talktofrank.com/worried-about-a-child).

## Alcohol

Increasingly young people are pre-loading with alcohol before going out which heightens the risk of them coming to harm or being drawn into anti-social behaviour or other offences associated with being drunk. If your children are going to be drinking alcohol over the festive period, please talk to them about safe limits.

The festive holidays are also a time when the Police sadly see an increase in domestic incidents within homes, many of which have children present. Often these incidents involve alcohol, so please drink responsibly in your home as children will be affected by this type of behaviour.

Information and advice for parents can be found on the NHS Choices website at [www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/2595.aspx?categoryid=62](http://www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/2595.aspx?categoryid=62).

## Sex

It's important for young people to understand what a healthy relationship is, to have access to good quality information and advice to help them make their own informed and safe decisions, and to know that they can talk to someone if they're worried about something.

Important considerations for young people are the fact that when they have been consuming alcohol or other substances it can lead to risky decision making. To minimise risks they need to be reminded to stay with friends and arrange to share taxis or be picked up by a trusted person so they are not left on their own to make their own way home. They need to pick well lit routes and if they are travelling with someone they have only just met that evening, to ensure they understand '**No means No**'. This is not to scaremonger, this is good safety advice for wherever they are, now and in the future.

The Sexwize website is designed for young people under the age of 25 and is a good source of advice and information about local services. Find it online at [www.s-wize.co.uk/sexwize.htm](http://www.s-wize.co.uk/sexwize.htm).

Another good website is The Site, which has information for young people age 16-25 about a whole range of issues including relationships, mental health, work and study and crime and safety. Find it online at [www.thesite.org/sex-and-relationships](http://www.thesite.org/sex-and-relationships).

If you think someone is pressuring a child to do something sexual, please contact Devon and Cornwall Police on telephone 101 (non emergency number) and ask to speak with your local Police Community Support Officer. If you think your child is at risk of immediate harm you can contact the police in an emergency on telephone 999. If you are worried that someone is trying to talk to your child in a sexual way online, or encouraging them to meet up when your child has only met them online, please report to CEOP at [www.ceop.police.uk/Ceop-Report/Ceop-Report-For-Someone-Else/](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Ceop-Report/Ceop-Report-For-Someone-Else/) and Devon and Cornwall Police.

## Domestic abuse

Abuse within relationships is never ok and over the festive period families can experience additional pressures which can cause existing abuse to escalate. If you're concerned for yourself, your family or someone else you know, please visit [www.areyouok.co.uk](http://www.areyouok.co.uk). If you're not sure what an abusive relationship is you can find out more at areyouok?

## Driving

If your child is learning to drive or has not been driving for long, check out The Honest Truth website [www.thehonesttruth.co.uk](http://www.thehonesttruth.co.uk). The first few years for a new driver are the most risky. Many parents contribute towards the cost of their child's driving lessons, first car and insurance. If you're helping to get them on the road, you can definitely ask them for something in return, which could include viewing The Honest Truth website together. Make sure that if they are a passenger in the car, they have the confidence to ask the driver to pull over (saying they are going to be sick is a good way of getting someone to stop) and then get out and call you. Sadly over 13% of all casualties hurt in collisions in Devon involve a 17-19 year old driver.

## Worried about a child

If you're a parent or guardian, chances are you know lots of other parents and children. If you're worried that a child you know isn't being cared for properly or is at risk of harm, please contact Devon County Council. Visit the <http://www.devon.gov.uk/childrenfamilies> to find out how to make a report. You can also call the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on 0345 155 1071 or email on [mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk)

## Local services

<http://www.y-smart.org.uk/> Drug and Alcohol Service for under-18s and advice for parents, throughout Devon.

<http://www.youngdevon.org/> Support services for young people from 12 to 25 years old

<http://www.devonyouthservice.org.uk/> Provisions for young people from 13 to 19 years of age

Devon and Cornwall Police Community Support Officers work in the community and can tackle a wide range of issues. If you have something you would like to discuss with your local officer telephone 101 to request a call back or a visit. In an emergency you can contact the police on telephone 999. You can also find Devon and Cornwall Police online at [www.devon-cornwall.police.uk](http://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk).