Keeping adopted children safe online

The internet is a valuable resource for adopted young people and their families, but there are also some specific risks facing adopted children online. Some of the most important things to think about are:

- **Influence of early childhood experiences**. Many adopted children experience traumatic events early in life. These negative experiences can make them more vulnerable in the future – both on and offline.
- **Difficulty adjusting to rules**. Children who are adopted later in life might be used to having different rules about their use of technology – or no rules at all. Rebelling against any new restrictions you put in place might make it harder to keep them safe.
- **Contact from birth families**. The internet has made it easier than ever for birth families to find adopted children and get in touch. While some contact can be a good thing depending on your child's circumstances, it can also be harmful if it's not properly managed. Unauthorised online contact could:
  - Undermine an adoption.
  - Put a child at risk of abuse.
  - Be very emotionally challenging for a young person to deal with.

Top tips

As an adoptive parent you'll need to balance protecting your child from these risks with giving them the freedom to explore the online world. Our top tips are:

1. **Talk to your child about privacy settings**. Help your child work out what privacy settings are, how they work and why they're important. Doing things like setting their social media accounts to be visible to friends only will give them more control over their personal information. And make sure you and the rest of your family are also careful what you post publicly, especially about your adopted child.
2. **Discuss what your child would do if their birth family reached out online.** Talk to your child and try to make a plan for how they will respond if someone from their birth family contacts them. Reassure them that it's normal to be curious about their past, including the people in it – but make sure they know they can come to you with any questions they might have.
3. **Don't be afraid to get help.** If you think something's not right, trust your instincts. You can talk to your child's adoption agency about contact from birth families, and always call 999 if you think your child is in immediate danger.
4. **Take an interest in your child's online life**. There are lots of ways for you to get involved in your child's life online without being too negative or restrictive. Asking them to show you their favourite websites and games will help you enjoy the internet together and give you a positive window into their online world.

For more advice about keeping adopted children safe online, watch this video from CEOP:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LV6P5swzDAI&list=PLB669A15C370C446C&index=10