Are you aware of what your child does online?

Parents are urged to beef up their knowledge about the internet to help ensure children stay safe online.

Police are seeking parents' help following recent reports that young people and children, some as young as 12, have received indecent images via 'apps' (applications) they were using.

A police spokesperson said: "Our message to parents is that there are potential risks to young people using the internet, and they should do their best to protect their children online in the same way as they would in any other situation. Safety is paramount and we want to prevent young people from becoming victims of crime via the internet.

"However, young people need to be aware that sharing an indecent image is illegal and if they are found to be doing so deliberately and maliciously we will seek to prosecute."

Police safeguarding specialists advise that you should not assume apps are safe to use. Check privacy settings and use them to limit accounts so that only people you know can to speak to your child.

Settings can change when apps are updated so it is wise to check them regularly, and also take a look at children's friends/contacts and ask them about anyone you do not recognise.

Talk to your child about the internet and its dangers. Explain why they should only talk to people they already know and never meet up with someone they do not know without the presence of a trusted adult.

The following are useful sources of information: the NSPCC Share Aware campaign has a parents' guide giving advice on how to monitor the use of apps and games http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/; the Thinkuknow website gives age-appropriate advice and information for parents/carers https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/; for Information and guidance on privacy settings and how to set them correctly. http://www.net-aware.org.uk