

Helping others as a Remote Digital Champion: how to keep you and your learners safe

07th May, 2020 by Harriet

If you are helping someone to develop their digital skills remotely, safety can feel like an intimidating issue. We know that online safety is often one of the biggest barriers to getting online and there are lots of other questions to think about too. What do you need to think about in terms of your own safety? What is your duty of care to your learner, and how do you ensure that your learner is set up to be safe online? This quick guide breaks it all down for you.



Keeping yourself safe

- If you are helping someone that you do not know, **be selective about the personal information you give out**. Learners will need a phone number to contact you and an email, but they don't need to know the car you drive or your home address.

- You might be using social media to promote your Digital Champion support and to help you find learners but **it's better not to befriend new learners on social networks.**
- As far as possible **set up separate accounts for your Championing work** e.g. a unique email account, and a separate phone number.
- **Ensure your computer is up to date** with software, anti-virus and firewall.
- **If you have a concern or feel uncomfortable** (e.g. you are talking on Skype and a learner speaks inappropriately to you), **end the session immediately.** If you are volunteering on behalf of an organisation report this to them immediately. Make a note of what happened for your records.



"I always keep records of my sessions with learners - otherwise it's tricky to remember what happened when. It's reassuring to have a bit of a paper trail."

Keeping your learner's data safe

- You will probably need your learner's phone number and email, but **don't ask for more details than you need** (you probably don't need an address, for example).
- **Keep all of their personal information safe and secure.** Don't store it on a shared computer or memory stick. If you're keeping a paper record, don't leave it anywhere for other people to see. Once you stop working with the learner destroy (preferably shred) any paperwork and delete any digital records.

- If they are **screen sharing**, make sure **you look away if a learner is entering a password, bank account details or other sensitive information**. Remind your learner every so often that they are screen sharing and that you can see their screen. It's surprisingly easy to forget!
- **Never ask for or record a learner's passwords** - recommend they use a [password manager](#) or keep them in a special notebook so that you can remind them about where their passwords are noted in future.
- If you keep a record of the sessions, **please don't record any personal information** and, again, destroy these records once you are no longer working with the learner.



"Remember that you are in a position of trust - it's important that we do right by the people we are helping."

What to do if you think your learner is vulnerable and in need of additional support

As you build your personal relationship with your learner, it's possible that you might find that they are the victim of abuse or neglect, or that they need extra support in order to maintain their health and wellbeing.

If you are concerned about your learner's welfare, here are some great steps.

- **Record your concerns:** write up your observations.

- **Report your concerns:** if you are Championing on behalf of an organisation, tell your manager. If you are an individual Digital Champion, report your concerns to the relevant authority. This could be social services, the police, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline or an organisation like Action on Elder Abuse.

If you are worried, NCVO has produced [this great resource](#) which goes into more detail about what to do and covers whistleblowing too.

Setting your learner up to be safe online

Fears about online safety can be a huge barrier to being online and it's important that your learner should be set up securely and not vulnerable to safety pitfalls.

When you first start to work with a learner, check the following with them:-

1. **Is their device's operating system up to date?**
2. **Are their security settings up to date – is their firewall on?**
3. **Do they have a secure connection to the Internet?**

You could get them to tell you what **device and operating system** they have before you have your first session, so that you are able to do a bit of research into how to run the necessary checks before your first session.

It's important to check that they are using a **reputable Internet provider** and not using a free, insecure network like those used in a café or library. It's unlikely that they would be at this time but important to check nonetheless.

Remote access

One option to consider as part of this set-up process is remote access. There are lots of tools available, such as 'TeamViewer' that enable you to access your learner's computer remotely and then to undertake safety checks yourself. You can read about some of the tools available [here](#)

It's something to use if both you and your learner feel comfortable with the idea. It can be a good way to speed up those initial safety checks, reassure you both that the necessary security really is in place on their device and get to the more interesting business of learning more quickly. However, it's not for everyone, so see how you feel.

Helping your learner to stay safe online

It's important to make sure that your learner knows the following in order to use the Internet safely and confidently.

- How to **identify and avoid common online scams** such as phishing.
- How to **keep financial information safe** when shopping and banking online.
- How to **stay safe on social networks** and other social sites such as **online dating** ones if they are using them.

[This excellent guide from Age UK](#) covers all of this and you could share it with your learner. We also have lots of [guides to online safety](#) here on the DU website and you can also share these with your learner.



"There are lots of useful online resources out there to help both you and your learner."

More resources on online safety

- Age UK's
- Child safety: if your learners are concerned about their children using the internet safely, there are loads of fabulous guides and the NSPCC has also put together
- Friends against Scams have put together to help people avoid Coronavirus Scams.
- We have lots of here on the DU website.

What next?

Now that you've thought about who to help and how to find them, here are some suggested next steps on your journey to become a Remote Digital Champion.

Learn top techniques for being a Remote Digital Champion.

[Go to this guide](#)

Read about the great tools and tech that are available to Remote Digital Champions.

[Go to this guide](#)

Understand how to keep you and your learners safe when offering remote support.

[Go to this page](#)