Lancashire Safeguarding Boards

PEGI

Focus On…What is PEGI?
- useful advice for Parents and Carers

Online gaming can often be overlooked when it comes to Online Safety and yet, it is one of the most popular discussion topics when talking to children and young people about the online world. Don't know your *Minecraft's* from your *Fortnite's* or whether a game is suitable for your child? The following information provides an overview of the PEGI system and some useful tips when it comes to online games.

Understanding that risks such as grooming, cyberbullying and inappropriate content all apply to the online gaming environment is extremely important. Historical messages such as *stranger danger, knowing who you are talking to* or being able to block someone are all important messages, but what about the content itself? Within the UK, we use a system called PEGI (Pan European Game Information) as a game content rating system. In a similar structure to that used for movies, PEGI uses 5 distinct age categories ranging from 3

through to 18. In addition, PEGI also uses 'content descriptors' which give information about what content the game contains across 7 categories such as whether the game contains violence, bad language, fear, sex, gambling, drugs and discrimination.


PEGI Content Descriptors (in order of incidence (l-r))

Despite what some children may have us believe (!), the age ratings given to individual games do not relate to skill levels required or the difficulty of the game but, to its suitability for a given age. Some example age ratings for popular games include those shown in the illustration below:

Whilst these are examples of a number of popular titles, the PEGI website includes a useful feature that allows users to enter the name of a game to find out further information including its PEGI rating, content descriptors and what the game involves – see: https://pegi.info
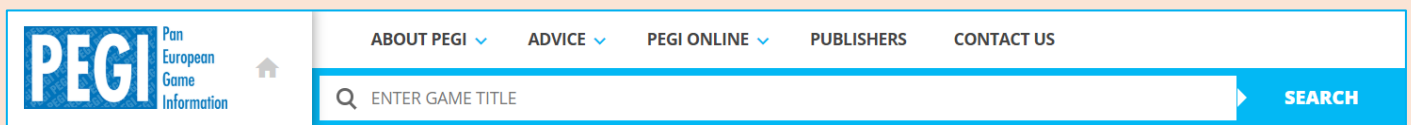
Importantly, the majority of games often involve online interaction with other players and it is therefore extremely important that children understand that online rules about appropriate behaviour and keeping personal information private apply to games too.

A common concern raised when delivering Parental Awareness sessions is the amount of time children and young people spend playing games. Games are designed to be engaging and immersive so setting ground rules for time limits and your expectations beforehand is very useful. Additionally, popular gaming consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation have very useful features within their settings that can help in this regard, along with options to set age ratings, purchasing and other permissions. Alternatively, others such as the Nintendo Switch have downloadable apps to support parents with safety settings (http://bit.ly/switch-pegi).

Whilst there are risks associated with the online world, young people often point out that as adults, we must be careful not to forget the positives. Online games can help with developing important skills such as collaboration, perseverance, creativity, teamwork and building resilience. However, the single most important thing parents and carers can do to help their children stay safe online is to have a conversation. Equally, getting involved helps our understanding so trying out some of the games our children play can build confidence to address potential issues (and can be fun too!).

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