A SUMMARY OF...
DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

WHAT IS IT?

A 'digital footprint' or 'digital tattoo' as it is sometimes known, is a term we use to describe the information about a person that exists on the internet as a result of their online activity. It's like a trail you leave behind when you use the internet or a computer. This might include the sites you have visited, the people you have communicated with, images shared, games played, comments made and items purchased.

CONSIDERATIONS

- It is crucial to monitor children's online activity. If they don't use the internet themselves (remember though, that gaming, using WhatsApp and YouTube involve internet use), it's vital that we consider what information about them could be online - either due to our own posting and sharing or that of others.
- Let your child know that their actions online have consequences and can hurt others or come back to haunt them in later years!

REMEMBER:

- It is not a problem per se to HAVE a digital footprint. In fact, all of us do if we use the internet in any way, shape or form. It is important however to be aware of how this could affect us in the future.

- The good thing is, we do have some control over the size of our digital footprint and what it might say about us. Sometimes googling our own name can help us to realise just how much information there could be out there. Remember, that if we can find out, so can future employers, landlords, university admissions teams and even future partners or friends.

- You leave a tiny digital marker or footprint behind each time you visit a website, click on a link, tap on a video, play an online game etc. These are different from ordinary footprints because they don't automatically disappear. Even though you can't always see the trail, it could be there for good. What happens online does not always stay online!

- It is important to talk to our children about the effects of their digital footprint. For example, something silly that they posted 5 years ago could be found by someone who is making a decision about giving them a job, work experience, or a college place. It's important that children know they need to think before they post.

HOW TO HELP

If children post images of themselves online, it is important to check these first to ensure they are not inappropriate in any way. Try to talk to your child about who might gain access to these images and why. Conducting a 'social media spring clean' once a month can be useful in order to monitor photos that - while not indecent- may be embarrassing or inappropriate.
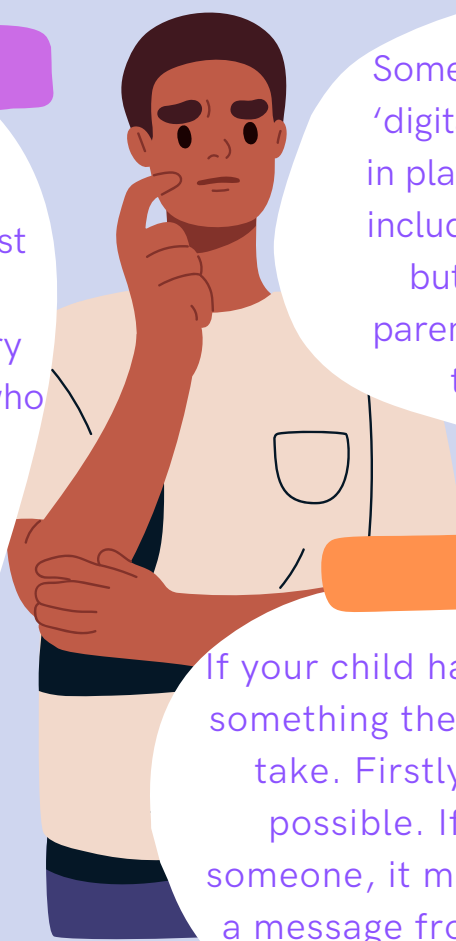
BE AWARE

Some families find it very useful to have a 'digital contract' which is a fun way to put in place rules around internet use. It might include that the child can use social media but only if they share passwords with parents, or that parents/carers can check the child's images once a week.

LISTEN

If your child has made a mistake online, or posted something they regret - there are several steps to take. Firstly, delete the comment as soon as possible. If the comment has been sent TO someone, it may be worth deleting it then sending a message from you as parent/carer apologising and explained why you have deleted it.

SUPPORT

Remember, if you are worried, you can contact the pastoral team at The Meadows 0121 569 7089 for some help. If indecent images have been shared, you can use the Childline Report, Remove Tool. Internet Matters is a useful website for advice on how to keep your child safe online. National Online Safety has a free app for parents/carers.