**A parent & carer's guide to…
age ratings of apps and games**

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As many of you will be well aware, apps and gaming are very popular pastimes of children and young people. Many of you will be familiar with the Toca series, Pokémon Go, Minecraft, Thomas the Tank Engine, Lego and YouTube – and the list goes on. Young people are also playing games like Grand Theft Auto or using apps like Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter or Spotify (in English only).

This article explores some of the challenges of appropriate gaming and app ratings faced by parents and carers. It will help you find out more about game ratings and where to get help and support.

Is the content age-appropriate?

Whatever the age group one point is clear: although children and young people love using apps and games, there is a risk that many are using and accessing content that is not age-appropriate.

You may find it difficult to manage apps and games especially if you have children of different ages. Often a younger child may want to play the same games and apps as an older sibling. Or the younger child may peek over the shoulder and possibly see things that are not appropriate for their young age. Of course, this problem is not limited to siblings. In the playground, children talk about games, apps and the latest trends.

Children and young people may praise one game, app or social networking site over another, but it is unlikely that they will discuss the age ratings of those apps and games. The irony is that those age ratings provide the most important feature of that game, app or social networking site – protection of their development and maturity.

How ratings help

In addition to protecting children and young people, app ratings can also guide you to make informed decisions(in English only) about the content that their children see, the sites they visit and the games they play.

You may wish to learn how apps and games are rated (in English only) and begin a discussion about the appropriateness of certain apps or games using the resources identified below.

Information on age ratings:

- PEGI (in English only): European game rating and explanation of 3, 7, 12, 16, 18 labelling
- Entertainment Software Rating Board (in English only): North American rating system as a   large number of apps and games come from North America
- Common Sense Media (in English only): provides reviews on apps and games from the perspectives of parents, children and young people

Information on gaming and safe use:

You may wish to take a look at these resources from the Hwb Online Safety Zone:

- Gaming and Screentime – for parents and carers – learn what games your children are playing and how you can talk with your child to help them to play in a safe and positive way
- Gaming scenarios – scenario based resource that allows pupils to discuss safe and appropriate use of online gaming sites.

How do I talk about apps, games and social networking with my child?

Here are some tips for parents and carers of younger children:

- play a game with your child and review the age ratings together
- respect the age ratings despite the popularity of an app or game
- discuss the appropriateness of the app or game.

Here are some tips for parents and carers of young people:

- ask your young person about the types of games they play (in English only) and how do they feel when playing
- ask what types of apps are trending (in English only) and why do they like it
- explain your values and discuss whether the app, game or site is appropriate
- review this parent's guide to technology (in English only) to better support your young people as they use technology
- FamilyPoint Cymru also provides support and guidance which you may find useful.

There are many benefits to new technology and with your support and guidance your children can; play, socialise, be creative and learn in a technological environment.