

## A guide for parents and carers on mobile location based services



them to ask if they can locate them, they should decline if they do not properly know them.

- Explain that they should ask you before downloading applications or accepting any service offered over the phone and, if they are not sure, it is always best to check.
- If you think that a mobile location based service is being used inappropriately, tell your mobile operator who may be able to advise or help you.

For more information about location based services and any other services provided by your operator, you can find their contact details here:

- 3: [http://www.three.co.uk/Help\\_Support](http://www.three.co.uk/Help_Support)
- Orange: <http://help.orange.co.uk/>
- O2: <http://service.o2.co.uk/>
- T-Mobile: <http://support.t-mobile.co.uk/>
- Vodafone: <http://help.vodafone.co.uk/>



### Ofcom Advisory Team

Phone: +44 (0)300 123 3333  
Facsimile: +44 (0)300 123 0811  
Textphone: +44 (0)300 123 2024  
Welsh Line: +44 (0)300 123 2023

[www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)



## A location based service uses technology to find your mobile's position and provide services related to where you are.

There are two types of location based services.

### 1. Where a mobile user wants information to be sent to them on their phone e.g. a request for details of the nearest cash machines, the rail or bus station, or for a map or directions to a particular address.

Because the user initiates the service this is called an 'active' service.

### 2. Where a mobile user is located by another person.

Because the located user is the subject of a location based service initiated by someone else this is called a 'passive' service.

A passive service may help parents know where their children are when they are out and about and have their mobile phone with them.

It is passive services that have raised the most concerns because of the risk that someone is tracked without their knowledge and consent.

## How do they work?

Passive mobile location based services operated solely through the mobile phone networks are subject to a strict [Code of Practice](#) to prevent misuse. Passive location based services usually have to be paid for and only a parent or guardian can use them to locate a child under the age of 16. The child must consent before the service can be used. Text alerts will be sent to the phone as a reminder that the phone is connected to a location based service. The service can be switched off by the parent or the child at any time.

Some of the newer location based services don't use the mobile phone networks at all. Like the original location based services they work through mobile phone handsets, but they obtain the location

information in other ways, e.g. by using global positioning satellite (GPS) technology that is increasingly a feature of many mobile phones. The [Code of Practice](#) only covers location based services that use location data supplied by mobile operators.

## Should I be concerned?

Many of the newer type of location based services are available as downloadable applications and rely upon use of GPS and other location capabilities of the mobile phone. Some of these services allow the user to share their location information with others, such as friends in their social network or other players in a mobile game. So these services could be a concern to parents, as a child may inadvertently share their location with people they don't really know.

Some downloadable applications are only aimed at adults. However, it may be difficult for the provider of these applications to stop children from getting them.

## Tips on using location based services

Here are some tips on using the services and how to help keep your child safe:

- Check the location features of the mobile phone, such as GPS. It may be possible to switch GPS off. If you're unsure how to do that, look in the manual or ask your provider.
- Check what applications your child has on its phone. Usually, these will be stored in an Applications folder, available from the phone's main menu. If you're not sure what they do, open them and see.
- Talk to your children about the risks of posting their location information to a website, particularly if they have people on their friends list who they have only met online. Should anyone approach