



Learning Opportunities



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

December 2023

Advice for Parents and Carers

Welcome to our latest *Safeguarding* newsletter.

We aim to provide you with useful links, tips and the latest, relevant help and advice on issues we feel will be of importance to you.

If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact the school

The traditional image of Christmas is incredibly optimistic, and it can be wonderful, but we must remember that it certainly isn't a given for everyone. It can be a tough time because expectations are high and for some there can be the added pressure to 'have a good time'.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone especially at this time of year, we have to be extra-vigilant and offer support where we can and be proactive where we suspect or see the signs of abuse and neglect, and seek the help of the police and social services.

Concerned about a child?

Call [03000 41 11 11](tel:03000411111) ([text relay 18001 03000 41 11 11](tel:1800103000411111))

email social.services@kent.gov.uk

Out of hours and in an emergency

Outside of normal office hours, for example during the night, call [03000 41 91 91](tel:03000419191).

If you think someone is in immediate danger, the best thing to do is call 999 for the emergency services.

KCC – Christmas HAF provision

The HAF Programme offers families of children aged 4-16, who are eligible for benefits related free school meals (FSM), opportunities to access a range of free activities in the Christmas holidays.

The HAF programme of Christmas provision is now available on The Education People website (take a look under "where can I go for information about programmes in my area").

[HAF Programme - welcome information for families \(theeducationpeople.org\)](https://www.theeducationpeople.org/)

Some safeguarding issues to be mindful of over the Christmas period.



With the Christmas holidays upon us many young people are looking forward to having more free time. Parents may worry about what their children are doing online and need ongoing support. By accessing the information below there will be a reminder of the key Safety Net messages including how to set parental controls.

SKIPS SAFETY NET- KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE

<https://safetynet.skipseducational.org/parent-guides/>

It's Christmas Time – Parents guide to help keep children safe online

It's Christmas Time!

A Parent's Guide to Social Media

A Parent's Guide to Sharing Pictures

A Parent's Guide to Gaming

A Parent's Guide to Online Grooming

scan the QR code with your phone's camera to see the guides on our website

A Parent's Guide to Live Streaming

A Parent's Guide to Online Influencers

A Parent's Guide to Fake News

A Parent's Guide to Privacy Settings

It's always best to be prepared

Many parents may be planning to give electronic gadgets to their children this festive period. Our guide is designed to help parents take a realistic approach to help keep their children safe when using the internet, social media and playing online games.

Scan the QR code to find out more.

Online safety is when young people know who they can tell if they feel upset by something that has happened online.

Parents please contact your school to enquire attending their next e-safety workshop or have any concerns.

Working with Home Office 'PREVENT', The Police and Crime Commissioner and Children's Safeguarding Partnerships to help keep children safe online.

Skips Educational Email: info@skipsed.com Tel: +44 121 227 1941

Developed in partnership with

www.skipssafetynet.org

AGE RATINGS

Age ratings are in place to help protect your child. Here are the age ratings of some of the more popular apps that young people are accessing.



Whether your child is viewing films, accessing apps, playing games online, using social media or downloading other apps – check the age rating first to see if your child is old enough. In addition, the likes of PEGI include further content descriptors, which will give you an indication of the type of content that your child might view e.g. violence if accessing the app/game etc. Further information Parent Zone have published this article about why age ratings matter: <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III was released in November and has been rated by PEGI as 18. This means this game is unsuitable for those under the age of 18. PEGI include the following content descriptors:



PEGI state that “this rating has been given because it features graphic violence, violence against vulnerable and defenceless characters, motiveless killing of innocent characters, and use of strong language.” You can find out more from PEGI here:

<https://pegi.info/search-pegi?q=call+of+duty>

Fake Profiles and Cyberbullying

Setting up a profile impersonating somebody else with the intention of being unkind to others/to cause embarrassment to the individual is a form of cyberbullying.

If your child has set up a fake profile, talk to them about how this is a form of bullying and therefore not acceptable.

It is important that we talk to our children about the issue of cyberbullying and let them know that if they are ever a victim of it then it is not their fault, and they should tell you (or a trusted adult) straightaway. Talk to your child about reporting and blocking tools on social media or online games and show them how to use them to report any form of bullying.

Report Harmful Content have listed how you can report impersonation accounts on the different social media networks here:

<https://reportharmfulcontent.com/advice/impersonation/>



Tips to help keep your child safe online

Helpful tools and advice you can use to keep your child safe when they use the internet at home, at a friend's house or at school.

The internet is great for learning, sharing, connecting and creating. So try and balance how you guide your child on online safety with an understanding of why they want to use it. You don't want your child to feel they can't come to you if they encounter a problem online.

Set rules and agree boundaries as a family

- ✓ Set boundaries for how long your child can spend online and what they can do.
- ✓ Agree this as a family so that access to devices can be shared fairly.
- ✓ Remember there are tools that can help you manage and monitor access and use across all devices.

Talk about online safety and get involved

- ✓ Have conversations about online safety little and often and build it into other conversations.
- ✓ Ask questions about what they do online, such as what sites they visit and who they talk to.
- ✓ Make the use of the internet a family activity.
- ✓ Remember to share these rules with babysitters, childminders and other family members.
- ✓ Talk to other parents about internet use, such as what they do and don't allow.



Giving devices this Christmas



When buying devices for your child, it can be difficult to know what to look out for from an online safety perspective and what's age-appropriate.

Increasingly, different technology categories overlap. Whether it's smartwatches providing messaging or smartphones having brilliant cameras, understanding how these things work in the home is more important than ever. More information is available via internet matters UK.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/tech-guide/>

Here are just a few tips on how families can ensure that children and young people can enjoy and stay safe with any new technology and devices they may receive.

Research the device

[Common Sense Media](#) is a website which reviews games, apps, services and more to help you decide if something is appropriate for your child.

Once you have settled on a device, have a look out for any parental controls you can put in place, and take a look at the privacy settings available.

Set up the device ahead of your child opening it

A great way to ensure your child starts their experience in the safest way is to get the device set up before you give it to them.

Once you've researched the device, you can charge it up and have a go at putting in place some safety settings and parental controls to help you feel comfortable with your child using it.

If you are gifting a second-hand device to your child, you can make sure that the device has been reset to factory settings before you give it as a gift. On Android devices you can restrict [what content can be downloaded in Google Play](#).

On Apple devices you can go into [Content & Privacy Restrictions in Screen Time](#) to help block and limit specific apps and restrict explicit content, purchases and downloads.

Have a conversation

It is important that your child knows that if they encounter something online that they haven't seen before, or something that worries or upsets them, they can turn to you for help.

It is important to give practical safety tips to your child in the case of coming across unwanted content, whether that's teaching them how to use report and block tools, or to turn the device off and speak to an adult they trust.

Remember to be curious and not furious - if they know it isn't their fault and you help them to overcome their issue, they're likely to come back to you to speak about any future issues.

The Safer Internet Centre also has some excellent advice in their Parents' Guide to Technology and includes device-specific settings for different models. Explore more about parental controls. Families may want to think about setting up a Family Agreement as

When parents & carers finally have the chance to spend some quality time with their child over Christmas, many face a familiar struggle to get their young one's attention away from their phone, console, tablet or computer. However, family fun doesn't have to exclude devices. Below is an example of seasonal suggestions...

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one issue of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

When parents and carers finally have the chance to spend some quality time with their child over Christmas, many face a familiar struggle to prise their young one's attention away from their phone, console, tablet or computer. Fun family bonding over the festive period, however, doesn't have to exclude devices. There are sackfuls of Christmas activities and ideas online which grown-ups and children can enjoy together. We've compiled our own 'nice list' of seasonal suggestions for how to...

MAKE THE MOST OF THE ONLINE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS

1 EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY
Budding bakers will relish helping out in the kitchen with some tasty festive treats. Spend some time together researching child-friendly Christmas recipes online (the BBC Good Food site is an excellent place to start), and then you and your little elves can rustle up gingerbread santas, marshmallow snowman or reindeer shortbread. The only thing that's more fun is eating your creations afterwards!

2 THE OLD SONGS ARE THE BEST?
We've all had that Christmas compilation CD that was almost perfect. If it wasn't inexplicably missing one of your best-loved tracks. In this era of music streaming, however, your little helpers can assist you in compiling a definitive playlist of all your favourite seasonal songs – no more pinning for The Pretenders or wishing for Wizard.

3 DECK THE HALLS
There's no such thing as 'too many' Christmas trimmings! Let your child channel their excitement into some creative crafting, and you'll make memories as well as your own DIY decorations. There are loads of step-by-step guides online (including video walkthroughs on YouTube) for seasonal showpieces like paper plate angels, handprint wreaths and cupcake wrapper Christmas trees.

4 A WORLD OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW
From turkey on the beach in Australia to roller-skating to church in Venezuela, Christmas is celebrated in a variety of ways worldwide – curious youngsters might enjoy discovering other nations' festive traditions online. Google's Santa Tracker is a brilliant (and free) starting point, with games, activities and animations to help children enjoy learning as they count down to the big day!

5 THE NEAR AND THE DEAR ONES
Between time constraints, distance, the weather and Covid precautions (or a combination of all four) for many families it just won't be possible to physically spend time with everyone they'd ideally like to this Christmas. Video calling technology, of course, takes some of the sting out of the disappointment by virtually transporting loved ones into your living room.

6 KIDS FROM ONE TO 92
If Santa's brought your young ones a console this year (or they already had one), it's a perfect excuse for some quality time while they gleefully trounce you at FIFA or Mario Kart. Digital versions of traditional board games like Monopoly and Cluedo are available on most platforms, too; get the whole household together for a modern take on some old-school family fun.

7 A WINTER'S TALE
Everyone enjoys a story at this time of year: after all, the whole celebration is based on an engrossing yarn. Sites such as Audible are an excellent way of entertaining excited young ones, with classics like Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and seasonal short stories by Enid Blyton alongside more contemporary Christmas tales by the likes of Tom Fletcher, JK Rowling and Ben Miller.

8 CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THOSE FACES
People used to express their gratitude for a thoughtful Christmas gift with a thank you card or a dutiful phone call. Not in the digital age: now your relations can see first-hand on video calls how delighted the children are with their presents – and even how they look in that slightly questionable hand-knitted pullover.

9 BROUGHT ME SOME CORN FOR POPPIN'
Snuggling up against the winter weather with the family (and a generous helping of chocolates) to enjoy a well-loved movie is a delightful Christmas tradition. The usual streaming services have some classic candidates on offer: *Home Alone* and *The Santa Clause* are on Disney+, while Amazon Prime has *Elf* and *The Grinch*, and Netflix goes with *The Princess Switch* and *The Christmas Chronicles*.

10 GUESS WHAT I FORGOT?
Friends and family pitting their wits against each other on Zoom, Teams or Skype really took off during lockdown, so why not revive the tradition over the holidays? Your questions could be on the biggest news, sport and showbiz stories of 2021, or be Christmas themed, or you could stick to classic general knowledge. Ideal for those days between Christmas and New Year.

NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

www.nationalonlinesafety.com @natonlinesafety /NationalOnlineSafety @nationalonlinesafety

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REMEMBER

Providing opportunities for emotional regulation is important during the festive period particularly when normal daily routines may be different. Be sure to...

* Build in quiet times to the festive days, after each exciting point providing time to calm, regulate and touch base.

* Make time to get some fresh air or take some physical exercise.



Christmas and mental health

Christmas can affect our mental health in lots of different ways. It's a time of year that often puts extra pressure on us.

Why Christmas can be a hard time

Christmas can be difficult for anyone, at any point in their life.

You might be struggling this year for the first time. Or you may have found Christmas difficult in the past, and you're dreading it again this year.

You may also enjoy Christmas, but not be able to celebrate it how you'd like to. Or you might find some parts enjoyable, but other parts stressful.

Looking after yourself

Be gentle and patient with yourself. It might help to think about what is best for your wellbeing during Christmas, and prioritise what you need.

Remind yourself that it won't last forever. You could set a 'start' and 'finish' time for what you count as Christmas.

Set your boundaries. Try to say no to things that aren't helpful for you.

Let yourself experience your own feelings. Even if they don't match what's going on around you, they're still valid. For example, if you don't feel like celebrating Christmas when everyone else does.

Take time out. Do something to forget that it's Christmas or distract yourself. For example, you could watch a film or read a book that's set in the summer. Or you could try learning a new skill.

Let yourself have the things you need. For example, if you need to take a break instead of doing an activity, or need a little bit of quiet time.

Urgent and other support available

- shout 85258**
Shout offers confidential 24/7 crisis text support for times when immediate assistance is required
Text "SHOUT" to 85258 or visit [Shout Crisis Text Line](#)
- SAMARITANS**
Samaritans 24/7 365 days a year - they are here to listen and provide support
Call: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org
- Crisis Tools**
Crisis Tools helps professionals support young people in crisis - short accessible video guides and text resources
Sign up for free resources [here](#)
- PAPYRUS**
Papyrus provide confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person
Call: 0800 068 41 41 or Text: 07860 039967 (opening hours 9am to midnight - 365 days a year)
- childline**
Childline confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem
Call: 0800 1111 anytime or [online chat with a counsellor](#)
- Good Thinking**
Good Thinking is London's digital wellbeing service and provides a range of resources for young people to help improve mental wellbeing including free NHS-approved apps
- THE MIX**
The Mix provides free, confidential support for young people under 25
Call: 0808 808 4994 (11am - 11pm every day) or [Email](#)
- Beat**
Beat provide support to help young people who may be struggling with an eating problem or an eating disorder
Call the Youthline (under 18's) 0808 801 0711 or Studentline 0808 801 0811 (9am - 8pm during the week and 4pm - 8pm on weekends and bank holidays)
- kooth**
Kooth is a free, safe and anonymous online mental wellbeing community including live chat with the team, discussion boards, magazine with helpful articles and a daily journal a magazine



Isolation

Children and families can be cut off from their usual support network. They might not always be able to leave the house, which can leave them feeling anxious and depressed.

Home Alone

This is the time of year when many children are left by themselves for long periods and sometimes overnight. Children who are unsupervised are potentially put at risk of suffering or injury and the festive period is often a time when adults seek entertainment outside of the home.

Outside Influences

Children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from people outside their families. Child sexual exploitation, exploitation by criminal gangs, involvement in organised crime groups, trafficking and radicalisation can all be more prevalent during holiday periods when children aren't safeguarded.

Expense

Christmas places families under enormous pressure to spend money purchasing gifts, entertainment, and decorating. Sadly, many can't do this without going into debt.

Technology

Digital safeguarding is an important part of keeping children and young people protected. Gifts such as Tablets, Gaming Consoles or Smartphones can all be used to go online so it is important to think ahead about what safety features are available and set them up in advance.

Mental Health

Research by mental health charity Mind has shown that people with mental health problems struggle with self-harm and suicidal feelings due to the pressure of Christmas and this places children and young people in extremely vulnerable situations.

Children & Young People in Kent and Medway can access specific support services - they are just a text, call or a click on website or app away.



ChatHealth is available for young people aged 11 to 19 in Kent and offers a confidential and anonymous texting service to a nurse via 07520 618850. However, the service is only available Monday to Friday and between 9am and 5pm.



Created by young people for young people. If you are aged 10 to 16, [MoodsPark](#) is a place where you can learn how to look after your emotional and mental health and find ways to help you bounce back when life gets tough.



[Good Mental Health Matters](#) provides information to help you make small changes to improve your mental health and give you the tools you need to cope when things get tough. There are videos to watch on five ways to keep stress in check and protect your mental health.



The [Mind and Body programme](#) is delivered to 13 to 25-year-olds in school and the community to explore and better manage thoughts and behaviours associated with self-harm.



CHUMS specialist bereavement support

[CHUMS](#) offer specialist bereavement support to children and young people from 3½ up until their 26th birthday in Kent and Medway. This specialist bereavement service is provided by a wide range of experienced, trained professionals and volunteers. Support can be tailored to provide evidence-based interventions to children and young people through 1:1, group and drop-in sessions.

Kent Youth Health

Through [Kent Youth Health](#) young people or their parents / carers can contact the school health teams from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, including during school holidays.

Find out more including how to refer yourself at www.kentyouthhealth.nhs.uk

This May Help

This May Help has been created to support parents and carers with concerns about their child's mental health.

The website gives easy-to-follow advice to help families manage their child's mental health. This advice was developed by NHS professionals and parents who've been through their own child's mental health journey.

Parents and carers have shared advice that helped them and that may also help other families. The advice covered on This May Help includes: self-harm, gaming and online activity, teenagers safety, eating disorders, school avoidance, understanding mental health, understanding teenagers, online threats, building rapport, building resilience, building a support network, self-care tips, managing an emergency, managing in a crisis, and preparing for a children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) appointment.

The films offer advice across six main subject areas, with ten additional films offering supporting information. The films can be viewed in any order at any time. Each film has a dedicated page where you'll also find helpful advice and links to other resources. The text for each subject is available from the [downloads page](#).

Our Safeguarding Team are always available to offer support and guidance on any safeguarding issues or concerns.

Our Safeguarding Team



Simon



Kev



Cath

Our School website features a Safeguarding area which includes links to our policies and our parents / carers & visitors
Safeguarding leaflet

<https://learningopps.org/safeguarding/>

Please contact Simon Graydon (Designated Safeguarding Lead) if you have any Safeguarding / Child Protection concerns: simong@learningopps.org 01304 381906 / 07394 984289



From everyone at Learning Opportunities we would like to wish you a happy and safe Christmas & New Year.