



Learning Opportunities

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

February 2024

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



Children's Mental Health Week 5-11 February

Launched in 2015 Children's Mental Health Week exists to empower, equip and give a voice to every child in the UK – this year's theme is 'My Voice Matters'



Did YOU KNOW?

Kindness causes elevated levels of dopamine in the brain, helping us feel happier.

#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek



Kindness is a simple way to help EVERYONE. When we are kind to each other, it helps us to feel connected, which means we forge new friendships or deepen existing ones. What we say matters.

Research has also shown that when we're kind, when someone is kind to us or even if we just witness kindness, our bodies release feel-good hormones which lift our mood.

It's also been shown that people who are kind have much lower stress levels, age more slowly and have healthier hearts. Kindness isn't just a nice thing to do, but can help us improve our own well-being, while helping others at the same time. Children's Mental Health Week is a perfect time to start!



Online Safety Day

27th February 2024



Online Safety

What is wearable technology and is it safe for children?



Some students will have received gifts at Christmas they can use to go online so it is a good opportunity to give some thought as to how we can all support them to stay safe in the virtual world whilst having fun.

Wearable technology is any kind of electronic device designed to be worn on the user's body.

Common examples of wearable technology include:

- ❖ Smart jewellery – smaller devices typically work with a smartphone app for display and interaction.
- ❖ Fitness trackers – monitor physical activity and vital signs. They may connect wirelessly to an app for data storage, processing & reporting.
- ❖ Augmented reality (AR) headsets – use a real world setting and integrate digital information into a display of the user's environment in a way that enables interaction with real world and virtual reality.
- ❖ VR headsets – entirely replace the user environment with digital information and enhance the fictional reality.
- ❖ Virtual assistants – these can be clipped to clothing and are controlled with voice and gestures. Humane's AI Pin can answer questions, find information and carry out tasks in a similar manner to Amazon Alexa and Apple's Siri.

Smart Watches

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/smart-watches-and-fitness-trackers>

If your child now has a smart watch, it is worth understanding the safeguarding risks associated with these devices.



Parental controls

Think of the smart watch as more like a wearable smartphone, rather than a watch that lets you know if you've missed a call – and consider the same things you would with a mobile device, like whether you need to restrict or manage access to certain content, downloads and purchases.

You can set up your child's Apple Watch to connect to your iPhone, and then use the Apple Watch app to manage its settings.

Once the devices are paired, you can manage communications limits, notification settings, restrict explicit content or purchases, set an emergency contact, schedule down time or limit access to certain features during school hours.

<https://ineqe.com/>



YouTube cartoon series called Jeffy

Jeffy is part of a wider trend of animated videos that may look child-friendly but content-wise, they're not.

INEQE Safeguarding Group have found that despite the video's child-friendly animation style, online safety experts have found videos portraying sexual content, nudity, violence, gore, and more inappropriate themes.

INEQE advise parents & carers to:

Stay calm. If you suspect the child or young person in your care has watched Jeffy or other inappropriate cartoon-style content, don't panic. Approach them calmly, ask open questions and listen. Importantly, avoid mentioning Jeffy or similar animations by name as you may be accidentally alerting them to something they knew nothing about!

Talk to them. If you know for sure they have viewed inappropriate content, ask them to explain what they have seen and give them space to tell you in their own words. It may be emotional or embarrassing to discuss, but being able to talk through complex feelings in a supportive environment will help them.

Identify help. It's important that children and young people have someone they can turn to for help, even if that person is not you.

Check safety settings. Ensure the correct safety settings are in place on the devices your child has access to and use the [Online Safety Centre](#) to learn how to restrict content, block and report on the platform.


The Dangers of Online Grooming and Radicalisation

Online grooming, with the intention of radicalising children and young people, is more common than many people assume.

Children and young people may be unaware that they are being groomed as they believe they have made friends online rather than being recruited.

Therefore, it is essential for parents and carers to understand the warning signs of online groomers. The best way to protect your child online is through open communication. Discussing the dangers of online grooming and extremist content with your child is a good way to raise awareness. It is also crucial to emphasise that not everything they read online is true.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS ONLINE GROOMING




Change in behaviour

The young person now spends more time online than before, preferring to stay connected and engaged with their devices.


Being secretive

The young person becomes secretive about their online activities and no longer allows you to look at their devices.




New relationships

The young person has made new friends, some of whom might be older than them.




New ideas

The young person has a new curiosity for ideas and uses language you wouldn't expect them to know.



Withdrawn

The young person separates themselves from their usual friends, choosing to spend time online and with new friends.



Fake News and Fact Checking

How can fake news impact children & young people

Harmful belief systems: if children watch content that spreads hate, this can become a part of their worldview. This could lead to mistreatment of people different from them or even lead to radicalisation and extremism.

Dangerous challenges or hacks: some videos online might promote dangerous challenges or 'life hacks' that can cause serious harm.

Confusion and distrust: If a child becomes a victim of dis or misinformation, they might struggle with new information. This can lead to distrust, confusion and maybe anxiety, depending on the extent of the misinformation.

S.H.A.R.E CHECKLIST



-  **Source** - check that the information comes from a reputable source
-  **Headline** - headlines are designed to grab your attention - make sure to read more than just the title
-  **Analyse** - check that the information presented is accurate.
-  **Retouched** - look for any images or videos that may have been edited
-  **Error** - look out for bad grammar and spelling



World Events - Explaining the News to Our Kids

There are a lot of distressing events happening around the world, which your child may see online.

Children of all ages are getting news from a variety of places. Whether it's from friends, TikTok, YouTube, or home, they can be inundated with information, different perspectives, and even graphic images and videos of breaking news. They may have trouble fully understanding news events - threatening or upsetting news can affect them emotionally. Many can feel worried, frightened, angry.

Common Sense Media & Childnet have published information on how to address and support your child when they see something worrying or upsetting online.



<https://www.common sense media.org/articles/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids>

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/navigating-violent-online-content-from-global-events/>

A straight forward guide to protecting children from online hate, extremism, and fake news










The pandemic has meant that children are spending more time than ever before learning and socialising online. Parents are juggling new technology alongside working and navigating the risks children face online. **Scan the QR code below to access the full interactive guide** which has links to resources, advice, and information to help you:

- Understand the risks and issues.
- Know where to get help.
- Find resources.
- Develop practical strategies.
- Start conversations.
- Build your child's digital resilience.






A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.



Mark Twain

Building Healthy Relationships and Recognising Toxic Friendships

Being online is an important part of how young people 'do' relationships. Young people are using online spaces for their social and romantic lives.

Developing new relationships can teach us how to handle and understand emotions, increase communication skills, boost self-confidence, and create a sense of belonging. But being in an unhealthy relationship negatively affects a young person's wellbeing. They might feel anxious and nervous or not free to make their own decisions.

These topics aren't always easy to talk about, so #AskTheAwkward has been created to help you to explore online relationships with your secondary aged children, making these conversations part of everyday life.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/ask-the-awkward/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/asktheawkward-a-parent--carers-intro.pdf>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/asktheawkward-parents--carers-help-sheets.pdf>

Signs of unhealthy relationships

An unhealthy relationship is one where a child is not being treated with respect. They might be forced or coerced into doing things they aren't comfortable with, be made to behave in a certain way, or be made to feel they aren't good enough. Because young people don't always realise when they are in an unhealthy relationship, it is important that adults are able to recognise the signs.



Nude image of you online?
We can help take it down.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-reporting/report-remove/>

Report Remove is a tool that allows young people to report an image or video shared online, to see if it's possible to get it taken down. Provided by Childline and IWF, it keeps the young person informed at each stage of their report and provides further support where necessary.

To use Report Remove, children just need to follow three steps:

1. Follow the instructions to confirm their age. If they're 13 or older, they can choose to prove their age using an age verification service called Yoti, though this is optional. They will need some ID if they want to do this.
2. Log in or create a Childline account so they can receive updates on their report.
3. Report and remove: share the image or video securely with the IWF, where a specialist analyst will review it and work to have it removed if it breaks the law. They will give it a digital fingerprint to help spot the image or video across the internet and take it down.

Childline will let the young person know the outcome of their report and provide further support where needed. And they're always welcome to speak to a counsellor about how they feel, whether online via 1-2-1 chat and Childline email, or via the free confidential helpline on 0800 1111.

More information about how each of the different ways to speak to a Childline counsellor can be found at www.childline.org.uk/get-support

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.



1 LISTEN

This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.

2 ASK TWICE

The campaign from time to change is great. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.

Are you sure?

3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION

This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.

6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY

Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I felt like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

7 EMPATHISE

'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.

4 BE OPEN AND HONEST

Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss; 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE

Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.

5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.

10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'

Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.

Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



Sources of Information and Support

Your GP
 Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>
<https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S

AGE RESTRICTION
PEGI
12

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Five Nights at Freddy's is a series of indie point-and-click horror games whose word-of-mouth success and widespread spin-off content on YouTube have helped each of the nine instalments so far to sell almost five million copies on Steam (the PC gaming platform) alone. Set in various deserted locations at night, with creepy animatronic characters suddenly coming to life, the games are rated PEGI 12 for disturbing/violent content, mild profanity and horror themes.

FRIGHTENING THEMES

Five Nights at Freddy's (FNaF for short) doesn't feature bloodshed like many horror games – but it *does* build tension and use jump scares, which may be too intense for young players. The sinister animatronic characters and the sensation of being trapped and defenceless could be particularly unsettling, as could the inclusion of disturbing elements such as murder or possession by evil spirits.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

18

As a result of FNaF's popularity, a sizeable YouTube community based on fan-made content has developed around the game. While the majority of this material is still child friendly, there are a number of channels which are geared more towards mature audiences; they contain adult and disturbing themes, for example, and (in some cases) age-inappropriate language.

STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

Due to FNaF's suspenseful atmosphere, it can be extremely stressful for players. Constantly checking that one's surroundings are safe is a crucial part of the gameplay and could create residual stress or even obsessive-compulsive behaviours. Several media reports have suggested that some younger children have experienced severe nightmares or sleep anxiety after playing games from the series.

PLAYING IN ISOLATION

Many parents will be relieved to learn that Five Nights at Freddy's is a single-player game which doesn't include any online chat functionality. Conversely, however, this could also make playing FNaF quite an isolating experience – especially if your child is spending a lot of time investigating the game's spooky, shadowy environments alone in their room, for example.

IN-GAME SPENDING

FNaF doesn't foreground in-game purchasing as strongly as many other well-known games, but some titles in the series do offer additional content that promises to enhance the experience. Five Nights at Freddy's: Help Wanted, for instance, is complemented by a Halloween-themed expansion pack called 'Curse of Dreadbear' (costing £8.99), which unlocks new levels and mini-games.

Advice for Parents & Carers

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Five Nights at Freddy's doesn't have conventional parental controls. However, if you're concerned about the potential impacts of the game's themes and content, you can simply choose not to let your child play it. If they use an Android or iOS device for gaming, you can adjust Apple and Google's built-in parental controls to restrict your child's access to certain content.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Every child is different, of course, so it could be worth playing Five Nights at Freddy's yourself for a while to gauge how your young gamer might cope with the series' more frightening and disturbing aspects. If they're old enough, you could spend some time playing it together – after all, it usually only takes between two and ten minutes to complete a level.

LIMIT SPENDING

Unlike many popular titles, Five Nights at Freddy's doesn't bombard players with tempting in-game purchase offers. It's worth noting, however, that some instalments in the series do provide the option for players to spend real-world money. With that in mind, it's important to either keep a close eye on your child's expenditure or limit their access to digital payment options.

SPOT THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on Five Nights at Freddy's, or you're worried that the game's scary themes are taking a toll, watch out for warning signs. Young people may start to prioritise gaming over everyday essentials like schoolwork or sleep; irritability or a lack of concentration could also indicate that their gaming sessions are going on too long.

TALK ABOUT THE RISKS

Before you allow your child to play Five Nights at Freddy's, it's wise to have a conversation about the game so that they're aware of the potential risks. Ensure that your child understands that the series is purposely designed to be tense and unsettling, and that they should stop or take a break if the intensity of the gameplay is making them feel uncomfortable or putting them on edge.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



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Disposable vape ban

The number of children using vapes has tripled in the last three years.

This is extremely worrying given the unknown long-term health impacts and the addictive nature of the nicotine in vapes.

The sale and supply of disposable vapes is being banned in England. There will also be the strengthening of the regulation of vape flavours, packaging and how they are displayed in shops.

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 / 01304 371527

Don't forget to also download the free National Online Safety App which can help you keep up-to-date with new developments in keeping your child/ren safe.

