



Learning Opportunities

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

February 2025

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.

Please note change of DSL contacts at the end of this newsletter

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

Please remember that safeguarding is the responsibility of
everyone DES

me, you, us
safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

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.

Holiday Activities
and Food
Programme
Kent



Helping families to flourish

We will be arranging for the families of students eligible for Free School meals (FSM) to receive vouchers to assist with food costs during the school half-term holiday.



Sleep - Teenagers

There is a great deal of emphasis on teaching teens about healthy eating and exercise but not enough on the importance of a good night's sleep.



Getting enough sleep is important for keeping our bodies and minds healthy. This is really important for teenagers. Sleep is an important part of all the changes taking place in the body and the especially the amazing teenage brain...

Sleep is crucial for teenagers, it has an impact on multiple areas such as physical growth and development, brain development and emotional wellbeing. It is recommended that teenagers aim for 8-10 hours sleep a night. However, many young people can struggle to achieve this for many reasons such as use of electronic devices, mental health issues, hormonal changes.

<https://teensleephub.org.uk/> This link provides information and support on how to get a good night's sleep. The Teen Sleep Hub has been funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund (administered by the charity, Mind, in partnership with the Mental Health Consortia) who understand how important sleep is for good mental health.

The Top Tips

Here is a little information to help you understand your teens sleep and how you can help.

- Emphasise the importance of sleep and that it improves memory and performance. Teens need at least eight hours' sleep on school nights.
- Encourage regular exercise – 20 minutes three times a week will help.
- Suggest they drink less caffeine (in cola and energy drinks as well as tea and coffee). Too much caffeine stops them falling asleep and prevents deep sleep.
- Point out that eating too much or too little close to bedtime – an over full or empty stomach – may prevent sleep onset, or cause discomfort throughout the night.
- Try and get your teen into a good bed routine – suggest that doing the same things in the same order before going to sleep can help.
- Eliminate electronic devices from the bedroom. If this isn't possible, try to zone areas of the room for work, leisure and sleep.
- Ensure a good sleep environment – a room that is dark, cool, quiet, safe and comfortable.
- Make sure your teenager has a comfortable bed. It may be time to get a new one – and encourage him or her to choose it themselves.

Remember, habits learned in adolescence often become lifetime habits – so make sure good sleep habits are learned early.

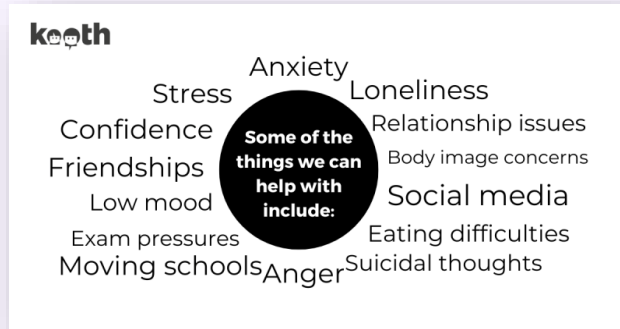
Further tips are available via the links below.

<https://www.startnowcornwall.org.uk/documents/WAP%20Toolkit/The-Teen-Sleep-Hub-eBook.pdf>

also

<https://www.childline.org.uk/> Childline have loads of advice and info about a range of topics including sleep.





According to the NHS, as many as 1 in 5 young people have a probable mental health issue.

Kooth is a free, safe, and anonymous online platform where young people can access mental health support whenever they need it. Delivered in partnership with the NHS, Kooth is available to anyone between the ages of 11-18, and in some areas, it extends up to age 25.

Accessing Kooth is quick and easy.

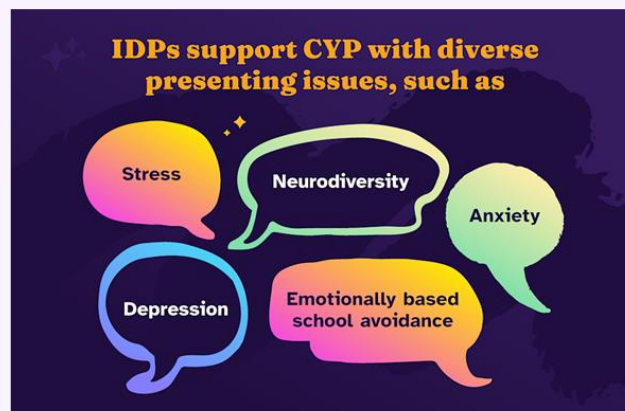
There is no need for a referral from a GP, school, or anyone else. You can simply visit the Kooth website and create an account to start accessing services immediately.

You can be completely anonymous, which helps a lot of young people feel more confident when seeking support.

It offers a comprehensive range of services specially designed to offer young people support in different ways.

IDP for waiting list support

Kooth's Integrated Digital Pathway (IDP) relieves NHS pressures by offering immediate support to people on waiting lists.



<https://www.everydayactivekent.org.uk/about-us/>



Everyday Active is a campaign created and developed by Active Kent & Medway, the Active Partnership for Kent & Medway, which is one of 43 Active Partnerships in England.

Vision: More people, more active, more often.

Mission: Improving lives through sport and physical activity.

Everyday Active aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity and promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle for all, especially among under-represented groups, including women, older people, people with disabilities, black and minority ethnic communities and people from lower socio-economic groups.

Activities Include:

Walking, Running, Cycling, Home & Solo Activities, Exercise Groups, Swimming, Sports and Active Days Out.

For hints and tips go to <https://www.everydayactivekent.org.uk/hints-tips/>

Live well

Kent and Medway

Live Well Kent and Medway is delivered on behalf of Kent County Council and the NHS by two charities:

Porchlight is a charity to help people address housing, social, economic and health issues.

Shaw Trust is a national charity helping people to achieve their ambitions and gain greater independence.

Are your feelings or worries affecting your health, relationships, work or day-to-day life?

If you're aged 17+ and live in Kent or Medway, their network of voluntary organisations and charities can help you:

- Better manage your mental health and general wellbeing
- Gain confidence and meet new people
- Get advice for money, debt or benefit-related issues
- Get support for housing concerns
- Access free therapy and counselling-type services
- Find work, volunteering and education opportunities
- Join local activities and support groups run by people with similar experiences.

Live Well do not offer crisis support but they do have a list of organisations that do.

<https://livewellkent.org.uk/>



Kent Community Health
NHS Foundation Trust

<https://family.kentcht.nhs.uk/support/emotional-health-and-wellbeing/supporting-your-childs-emotional-wellbeing/>

Supporting children and teen's emotional wellbeing

For some children and young people it can be difficult to manage and understand their feelings. Young people might experience a wide variety of difficulties including low mood, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating or might be avoiding school.

The team works closely with the [Kent Children and Young People's Mental Health Service](#).

[The Children and Young People's Counselling Service](#) offers counselling to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people aged four to 19.

[ChatHealth](#) is a text service for 11-19 year-olds. Young people can text with a member of our team about any physical or emotional health concerns they have. This service is available Monday to Friday, 9am on [07520 618850](tel:07520618850).



This service is confidential and anonymous



Early Help (support for families)

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/early-help-support-for-families#tab-1>

Early Help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem or as soon as it emerges.

The help required applies equally to safeguarding or complex needs that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

Social Media Influencers

What is an Influencer?

An influencer is somebody on a social media platform such as YouTube and Instagram, who have a high number of followers. Influencers share their opinions/ideas and may be paid to advertise/promote products through their account.

What should I be concerned about?

Whilst there are some great influencers, there are some that choose to share content that is for example, misogynistic, racist or misleading. These opinions can be expressed or interpreted as fact, so it is important to talk to your child and encourage them to fact check and critically analyse what they see and hear online.

What we see on social media

What we see is influenced by algorithms, which predict what type of content we are most likely to interact with. Whilst there are benefits of algorithms, it can mean that once we start looking at certain content, our social media feed can become more aligned with that opinion, creating an echo chamber and therefore we do not see a balanced picture. Find out more here: <https://www.childnet.com/blog/algorithms/>

What can I do to help my child?

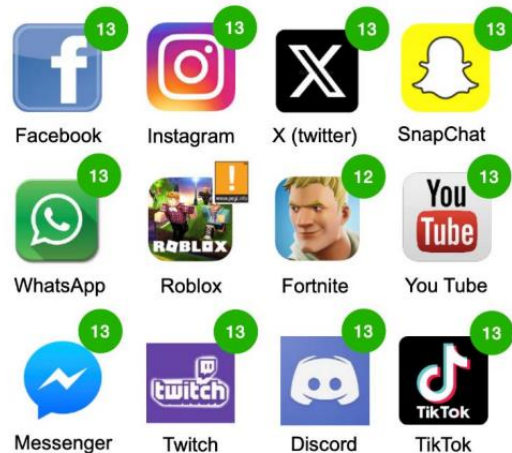
Talk to your child about social media and who they follow. If there is anybody that you are unsure of, then check their feed and discuss with your child if you find anything worrying.

Further information

<https://swgfl.org.uk/topics/social-media/>

AGE RATINGS

Age ratings exist to help protect your child, so we thought we'd provide you with a little reminder of how important it is to check the age ratings of what your child is accessing online. Here are the age ratings of some of the more popular apps that young people are accessing.



Smartphone Free Childhood



Smartphone Free Childhood is a parent-led movement whose mission is to protect children from the dangers of using smartphones too young.

The premise behind this movement is that all parents/carers of a class all agree not to give their children smartphones (therefore the level of peer pressure is reduced) for a set time or until a specific age. Are you ready to join? Find out more here:

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

Report Remove

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) have a Report Remove tool to help young people under 18 to report sexual images and videos of themselves and remove them from the internet.

This service is confidential and links in with Childline who can provide access to counsellors should further support be required. Find more information here: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/our-technology/report-remove/>

SEXTORTION

New report estimates half a million UK teenagers have encountered AI-generated nude deepfakes.

What is sextortion?

Sextortion is a form of online exploitation where a perpetrator coerces or blackmails a victim into providing explicit videos or images.

Sextortion can affect anyone, but children and teenagers are frequently targeted because they may be perceived as being more easily manipulated.

How extortion works:

1. **Initial contact:** the predator will contact the victim through social media, gaming platforms or messaging apps, sometimes posing as someone their age or someone they know or has mutual connections with.
2. **Building Trust:** the perpetrator builds trust through conversation, compliments and manipulation.
3. **Obtaining Explicit Material:** the predator may convince the victim to send explicit photos or videos, often by sharing fake images of themselves first.
4. **Blackmail:** once the predator has compromising material, they may demand money, threatening to share the material with friends and family.



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of AI has significantly increased the risks of sextortion for children by making it easier for perpetrators to create realistic fake identities, manipulate content and exploit vulnerabilities.

AI can generate deep fake images or videos that appear to show the victim, even if they've never shared explicit material of this kind.

Warning Signs of Sextortion

Parents / carers should be alert to changes in their child's behaviour that may indicate they are being targeted for sextortion.

Key warning signs include increased anxiety, depression or withdrawal from family and friends; reluctance to use devices or secrecy surrounding online activity; and sudden requests for money or attempts to conceal financial transactions.

Recognising these behaviours early can help parents / carers intervene and provide the necessary support to protect their child.

What to do if Your Child is a Victim

If your child becomes a victim of sextortion, it's crucial to handle the situation with care and understanding. Start by reassuring your child that they are not to blame and that you are there to support them unconditionally.

Avoid complying with demands or threats and instead focus on documenting the situation by saving any messages, images or evidence related to the incident. Report the situation to the police, who are experienced in handling these cases and are there to help, not to judge.

Your child may feel anxious or ashamed, so remind them that they are not alone, and that seeking help is the right step. Encourage open communication and if necessary, consider professional support to help address their emotional well-being. It is important to let pastoral staff at school know as they will be able to support your child when they are at school.

You can also report the image to Childline who will remove any images that have been made public.

Report the image here:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/infoadvice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/>



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Discrimination is “treating someone unfairly because of who they are.”

This means that a person is being treated differently or is put at a disadvantage because of someone else’s opinions or judgements of them.

At Learning Opportunities, we celebrate diversity and teach the importance of this to students. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and it will always be challenged. When students use discriminatory language, we always follow this up and educate on why this language is not acceptable.

In today's diverse and multicultural world, talking to children about inclusivity and diversity is an important aspect of their upbringing. As a parent / carer, you play a significant role in shaping your child's perspectives and attitudes towards different family structures and backgrounds. By instilling values of acceptance, empathy, and open-mindedness early on, you can empower your child to embrace and celebrate the rich tapestry of human experiences.

We know when children learn empathy and understanding, they will grow in to compassionate, well-rounded adults, and our future communities will be better.

The best way for students to learn about diversity and inclusion is to see it modeled by trusted adults.

You can encourage your child by teaching them to celebrate differences.

Model Inclusivity - Children learn by observing their parents and carers. Model inclusivity in your own behaviour and interactions.

Addressing Stereotypes - As your child grows, they may encounter stereotypes or biases in society. You can use these moments as opportunities for discussion.



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

Get help and support

There are lots of organisations who work to support families and children. Visit childnet.com/get-help if you're worried about an online concern.

NSPCC 0808 800 5000
nspcc.org.uk
Free support and advice for adults concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child.

 **family lives** 0808 800 2222
familylives.org.uk
Free support and advice on any aspect of parenting and family life.

YOUNGMINDS 0808 802 5544
fighting for young people's mental health
youngminds.org.uk
Free support and advice on how to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Helplines for children & young people

childline 0800 11 11
childline.org.uk
Providing help and support for under 18s.

THE MIX 0808 808 4994
themix.org.uk
Providing help and support for 13-25 year olds.

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

Our Safeguarding Team



Kev (DSL)

kevind@learningopps.org
Tel: 07394 984289 /
01304 381906



Kate (Deputy DSL)

kates@learningopps.org
Tel: 01304 381906

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

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

Lesley Buss (proprietor) has a strategic leadership responsibility for Learning Opportunities safeguarding arrangements.

Please contact Kevin Dunk (Designated Safeguarding Lead) if you have any Safeguarding / Child Protection concerns: kevind@learningopps.org Tel: 07394 984289 / 01304 381906

Please contact the school if you wish to discuss any aspects of your child's education.

Part of our Online Relationships Series



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www.nationalonlinesafety.com

What you need to know about...

CATFISHING



What is it?

'Catfishing'

Catfishing is when someone creates a fake online profile to trick people into thinking they are somebody else. They assume a fake identity and go the extra mile to make their victim believe that they are exactly who they say they are. Catfishers make up life stories and use photographs of unsuspecting victims to create fake identities. They will share life experiences, jobs, friends, and photographs to their fake accounts.



Know the Risks

Build Relationships Fast

Catfishing can escalate very quickly. As someone executing a catfishing scam is looking to achieve a goal - whatever that may be - they are likely to want to get things moving as quickly as possible and may seem desperate or want to push a relationship without even meeting.

Fraud and Identity Theft

Catfishers are people who create fake identities and could be taking other people's photos and pretending to be them. It is common for fraudsters to post pictures stolen from social media sites, including Facebook and Instagram. Catfishers may try to limit chat to text-based messaging and anything involving video is likely to be shunned for fear of revealing their true identity.

Online Grooming

Catfishers can be anyone and target anyone of any age. They may target children and aim to lure them into a sexual relationship or trick them into sending nude or inappropriate images of themselves.

Requesting Money

Catfishers may also try to trick children out of money. After building up trust and developing an online relationship, a catfisher may use an elaborate story to request money urgently. They may ask for cash for a loan, money for travel, or some other form of payment.

How to respond

Offer support

Always encourage children to talk to a trusted adult about anything that has made them feel uncomfortable online, particularly if someone they don't know has contacted them.

Report and block

Make sure that children are aware of how to report and block accounts on all platforms that they use. You can report fake accounts and block users to prevent them from viewing a child's profile.

Check with Google

If you are concerned that someone is using a child's photographs for their own benefit, use a Google image search to check. After uploading a photograph, use related images to see if anyone else is using photos that the child has previously shared online. If this is the case, report the user directly to the platform.

Report to authorities

If you suspect that a child has been the victim of any fraudulent, illegal or inappropriate activity, then you should immediately report it to the local police or authority.

Safety Tips

Set profiles to private

Go through children's security and privacy settings thoroughly to ensure that their online profiles are set to private. This means that only friends can see their profile and can contact them. It may also be a good idea to check through children's friends list with them and closely monitor their usage, especially if they are being secretive.

Be alert

In some cases, it's difficult to stop young people from talking to new people. In these circumstances, encourage children to be curious and ask lots of questions rather than rely on the information given in someone's online profile. Through the course of conversations, there may be inconsistencies with what is said and catfishers may be vague in response to specific questions about themselves.

Never meet

It's vital that children know never to arrange to meet up with people they meet online, and never to send money to them. Tell them to always speak to a trusted adult if they are being pressured into doing something they are not comfortable with.

Have honest conversations

Have regular and honest conversations with your child about what is safe to share with people online. Discuss the importance of keeping private information private and that anything that could identify them should not be shared online.

Our Expert

Pete Badh



Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.





Social media influencers are people who have established credibility in a specific industry and have the power to influence other people's decisions. Most commonly associated with YouTube and Instagram, 'influencers' will usually have a large number of followers and be viewed as authentic by their audience. It is for this reason that many influencers are often paid by big companies to promote their products in the hope of persuading their followers to purchase those goods.



What parents need to know about SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO 'INFLUENCERS'



AN UNREALISTIC PERCEPTION OF BODY IMAGE

Some of the most popular social media influencers often depict themselves as having the 'perfect body' and are paid to promote items such as health supplements or swimwear, which young people believe can help them achieve the same look. What is not always realised is that these images can be edited or filtered and aren't always a true-life representation. Your child may feel like this is what they need to look like and in some cases, become obsessed with their body image, which could contribute towards a lower self-esteem or even becoming depressed if they can't achieve the same look.



BECOMING UNREALISTIC ROLE MODELS

As children become more and more involved on social media and identify who their favourite people are to follow, they may come to see social media influencers as role models, particularly if they are attracted by the lifestyle they see online. This could lead them into developing potentially unrealistic expectations of life and in some cases, using their role models as an escape from reality, particularly if they feel like they're own life isn't very fulfilling.



ENCOURAGING BAD HABITS

Although many social media influencers will get paid to advertise brands and their products, they will also post their own material online too, usually depicting their daily life or an activity for example. This may have both desirable and undesirable consequences, with influencers able to inspire both good habits, such as healthy eating, exercise or kindness. However it may also encourage children to adopt bad habits, such as drinking, smoking, swearing or even criminal behaviour, particularly if these are seen to be endorsed by the influencer.



THE NEED TO HAVE EVERYTHING

Many social media influencers will take photos or videos of themselves wearing the latest fashion or jewellery which companies want them to promote. They may also be provided with the latest gadgets to promote or, if they are children, toys to play with in order to persuade their followers to purchase them. Many children will be keen to buy these items in order to keep up with the latest trends however if they get left behind, they could be made to feel inadequate or inferior by other children who do have them.



AUTHENTICITY OF ENDORSEMENTS

Social media influencers hold a lot of persuasion with their audience and are often looked up to by younger followers. Many children will see them as credible, authentic and trust what they see online. However, some influencers may not always believe in the product they are promoting and therefore can mislead their followers, abusing their level of confidence in them. Your child may therefore find themselves looking up to people who are disingenuous or who feign interest in activities that they themselves do not actually care about.



Safety Tips For Parents



FOLLOW WHO THEY FOLLOW

A good way to see first-hand who may be influencing your child is to create your own social media account and follow the same people they do. This will give you a strong indication of what is shaping how your child behaves, what they like and what they are taking an interest in.



TALK ABOUT ROLE MODELS

Role models can play an important part of your child's life, particularly outside of the home. Talk to your child about who they look up to and why. Remind them that not everybody online is who they seem to be and if you do have concerns that your child is being negatively influenced, work with them in finding more positive alternatives.

BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

It's important that your child is aware of how unrealistic perceptions of life can be depicted on social media and that it is easy to be deceived. Discuss with your child how images can be heavily edited, cropped or manipulated to create artificial scenarios and that often the lifestyle that people display on social media isn't always realistic or in fact the truth.



DISCUSS REALISTIC VS UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

If you notice your child has suddenly taken a strong interest in the way they look, or you find they are a lot more body conscious, then it's a good idea to speak to them about why they feel that way. If they seem unhappy, try to build their self-esteem by talking to them and listening to their concerns, helping to build their confidence through praise and positivity. Remind them that looks aren't everything and not everything they see online is actually a true depiction of real life.



ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT THINKING

Social media influencers can be quite powerful individuals who hold a lot of persuasive power so it's important to encourage your child to think independently about everything they see and engage with online. Talk to them about the dangers of blindly following others and in keeping an open mind when viewing content. Teach them to always question people's motives online, especially when they see individuals are promoting a brand or product which they are likely to have been paid to advertise but may not necessarily personally endorse.



Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

