Learning Opportunities

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

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

Cyber-flashing

Cyber-flashing happens when a stranger sends an explicit picture, uninvited, to a device (such as a phone or tablet) via WiFi or Bluetooth. It's sexual harassment. It's most likely to happen on public transport or in crowded places.

The file-sharing app AirDrop for iPhone and iPads is most commonly associated with cyber-flashing, but there are lots of different file-sharing apps out there. With AirDrop, it can be easy for anyone to send unsolicited images. The automatic preview feature means you also see images without actually opening them.

Steps to keep children & Young People safe

Restrict who can send files to your child's phone

Most file-sharing apps allow users to restrict who can send files to them by WiFi or Bluetooth. Find out which apps your child uses, then make sure your child knows how to use these settings.

For AirDrop on **iPhones**:

Go to Settings > General > AirDrop

Select '**Contacts Only**', or '**Receiving Off**' (to not receive AirDrop requests)

Alternatively, you can:

Open '**Control Centre**' (swipe down from the upper-right corner or up from the bottom of the screen, depending on the model)

Press firmly on the **network settings card** (this is in the shape of a square) in the upper-left corner. This will open more connectivity controls

Tap and hold the **AirDrop** icon

Select '**Contacts Only**', or '**Receiving Off**' (to not receive AirDrop requests)

Turn off Bluetooth when not using it

- Otherwise, it can be easy for strangers nearby to send images to your child's phone.
- To do this on **iPhone**, open 'Control Centre' (see above), then tap the Bluetooth icon (it looks like a 'B'). The icon dims when it's off.
- On **Android**, swipe down from the top (you might need to do this twice or scroll across). Then tap the Bluetooth 'B' icon to turn it off. It will be grey when Bluetooth is off.

Make sure your child knows what to do if it happens to them

Healthy relationships

When young people start dating, it can be a difficult time for parents / carers as they try to establish how much interest to take without coming across as interfering. Trying to strike this balance can be a juggling act as you want to keep your teen safe when they embark into the world of relationships.

Key Points:

- Starting up conversations early can help young people form what they want and do not want in relationships and can also help them identify what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- It is important to spot the signs if you think they are in an abusive relationship or experiencing negative relationships so you can support them in making decisions to safeguard themselves.
- Share your experiences with your teen of when you were younger so they can see that you may have gone through similar things too.

Young people can often feel under pressure when their peers start taking an interest in relationships and may feel like they need to do the same. Often their self-esteem and confidence can take a knock during this time too. You may find that when they start developing feelings for someone, they may start questioning how they look and whether they are good enough for this person.

https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/healthy-relationships

Sexual Health?

https://www.letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk/

What is sexual Health?

Sexual health is a broad topic and encompasses healthy relationships, emotional resilience, consent, prevention of child sexual exploitation, understanding the body, and knowing about the different methods of contraception as well as information on sexually transmitted infections (STI's) including HIV and how to prevent them.

There is lots of good help and advice for parents and carers regarding sexual health and relationships on the internet.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation – guide aims to help parents / carers understand the difference between expected teenage sexual exploration and behaviour that can harm others or themselves. It will also point you towards helpful responses.

CEOP's Thinkuknow – The Child Exploitation & Online Protection (CEOP) Command is a command of the National Crime Agency working to cut serious and organised crime relating to online and offline child exploitation. Thinkuknow is a series of resources from CEOP's in house education programme aimed at Children, Young People, Parents, Carers & Professionals

Barnardos – a national charity supporting children and families, read about how they provide support and a programme called Real Love Rocks

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS BREAK THE CSE CYCLE

Everyone needs strong, positive relationships in order to thrive. For young people this could be a parent or guardian, but for many the professionals they come into contact with are equally important.

If young people trust the right adults around them, CSE can be stopped at an early stage.

If some or all of these tricks sound familiar to you, please contact your local CSE support service.

1

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS ARE MOST AT RISK

Perpetrators tend to target young people who might be a bit low. This could be for many reasons including: poor mental health, learning difficulties, dysfunctional family relationships, recent bereavement, recent house or school move and social isolation amongst others.

We all need extra support sometimes. If a young person is getting the help they need they're less likely to be targeted.

2

PERPETRATORS USE FALSE SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES

It is easy for a perpetrator to hide their true identity and age by creating a false social media profile and posting a few attractive-looking photos. Often they add a few friends of the target young person to make it look like they are part of the same friendship circle.

If a young person has an adult they trust around them, they're more likely to open up about a new person they've met online.

3

THEY USE INFORMATION ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL MEDIA TO ESTABLISH COMMON GROUND WITH THEM

Perpetrators often trick young people into feeling that they have found someone who is really on their wavelength, with similar likes and interests as themselves. This can mean they are more likely to accept the offer of a face-to-face meeting.

When a young person already has strong bonds in their life, they're less likely to feel the need to meet up face to face. Even if they do, they are more likely to tell someone.

4

THEY MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL THAT NOBODY ELSE REALLY UNDERSTANDS OR CARES FOR THEM

The perpetrator's goal is to isolate the young person and make them dependent on them. Whilst on the one hand, young people are made to feel loved, respected and accepted by the perpetrator, they are also made to feel that their other friends are disloyal or jealous or that their family are controlling and treat them like a kid.

Feeling that nobody understands you is common for young people. Having a positive connection with an adult can help people work through this.

5

THEY SHOWER YOUNG PEOPLE WITH GIFTS

Groomers often give young people gifts they could not otherwise afford or have access to like: trainers and clothing, new devices, alcohol and drugs, jewellery. Sometimes, it isn't even material possessions; it can also be things like time, attention or affection.

If a young person already has a trusted adult to talk to, it can stop gifts and attention from an abuser having the desired impact.

6

THEY DESENSITIZE YOUNG PEOPLE, AND GET THEM TO SHARE INAPPROPRIATE IMAGES

Perpetrators of CSE often attempt to desensitise young people and normalise inappropriate behaviour- sometimes using pornography. A groomer may also try to persuade a young person to share sexually explicit images, which can be used against the young person.

CSE workers train young people about the dangers of sharing explicit images online. If they understand the implications of this, they're less likely to be coerced into sharing them.

7

THEY MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL THAT THEY OWE THEM SOMETHING, AND SOMETIMES RESORT TO THREATS AND BLACKMAIL

Having accepted gifts and treats from a perpetrator, young people are then usually made to feel that they are indebted and that they owe something in return for what they have received.

If exploitation reaches this stage, it's vital the young person has access to specialist support to help them through the experience and to recover from it.

Catch22 provide services in many areas of the UK. Visit www.catch-22.org.uk/offers/missing-and-cse to find out more.

Netflix mini-series 'Adolescence'

The recent TV series 'Adolescence' has sparked conversations about the real-life challenges young people face, both online and offline. While the digital world offers incredible opportunities for learning and socialising, it also presents risks that parents and carers need to understand.

The series shows how social media, online platforms and gaming forums can expose young boys and men to communities promoting extreme views of masculinity, relationships and gender roles. Although parts of these spaces focus on ideas of self-improvement and fitness, many dip in to misogyny, anti-feminism and toxic masculinity, often cloaking their messages as 'truths' about dating and society.

Young boys might start encountering content on sites like TikTok, Reddit, Discord and YouTube where influencers use humour, memes and motivational-sounding language to make their opinions and beliefs feel empowering or, in some cases, enlightened.

The programme highlighted something every parent / carer needs to know—the hidden language of emojis. While most emojis are harmless and fun, a growing number of them are being used to communicate hidden messages—sometimes these are linked to bullying, inappropriate content or even illegal activity, such as drugs. That's why it's essential for parents to understand the double meanings behind some of these seemingly innocent icons.

Just because your child uses these symbols, doesn't automatically mean they are accessing harmful online spaces. Your child may also not know where the words or symbols originally came from or how harmful they are, but they may be influencing their thinking.

Understanding the symbols and language used in these spaces is not about policing how young people communicate but about guiding them towards balanced views and ensuring they are not drawn into extreme or harmful ideologies. By remaining informed and pro-active, we can all help young people navigate online spaces safely while fostering respectful, healthy and inclusive attitudes in the real world.

Taken from ssslearning.co.uk (Online Safeguarding and Duty of Care)

Here are a few simple steps to support your child:

✅ **Start conversations:** ask your child about how they use emojis and what they mean to them.
✅ **Stay informed:** keep up with common digital slang and social trends.
✅ **Check in regularly:** know what platforms your child uses and how they interact online.
✅ **Create a safe space:** encourage your child to talk to you if they see or hear something concerning.
✅ **Use monitoring tools where appropriate:** but always use this alongside open communication.

EMOJIS

General Manosphere Emojis		
	**Flexed Biceps**	Stands for being a strong dominant man, often linked to gym culture and the idea of being a 'high-status' man.
	**Fire**	Used to praise someone for agreeing with manosphere beliefs or sharing an opinion that supports them.
	**Red Circle**	Symbolises 'red pill' thinking – the idea that men need to 'wake up' to what they see as an unfair system working against them.
	**Black Circle**	Represents 'black pill' beliefs which say that men who aren't naturally attractive have no real chance in dating.
	**Skull**	Used to show extreme hopelessness, especially in incel groups, suggesting they've given up on dating.
	**Cold Face**	Shows emotional detachment, often linked to the idea that men should be tough and avoid showing feelings
Women and Dating		
	**Crown**	Used to show dominance, often linked to the idea that 'men are kings'. Sometimes used to mock men seen as too submissive to women.
	**Gorilla**	Represents extreme masculinity, sometimes used jokingly to suggest raw strength and dominance.
	**Snake**	Used to insult men who support feminism or gender equality, calling them traitors.
	**Money Bag**	Stands for the belief that wealth equals power and makes a man more attractive to women.
	**Upside down face**	Used sarcastically to mock feminist views or men who don't follow manosphere beliefs.
Gender and Relationships		
	**Dress / High Heel**	Used to refer to women in a stereotypical or objectifying way
	**Cat Face / Cat**	Used as an insult towards women, sometimes implying they are lonely or undesirable
	**Wilted Flower**	Suggests a woman is 'past her prime', often used to criticise women over 30 in discussions about dating and relationships
	**Baby Bottle**	Used to mock men who are seen as too emotional or dependent on women, often calling them 'weak' or 'beta males'.
	**Unicorn**	Represents the idea of a 'perfect' woman – someone who is submissive, young and 'pure', according to manosphere beliefs.
Mocking and Insults		
	**Clown Face**	Used to make fun of men who are seen as overly supportive of women, feminism or progressive ideas.
	**Monkey Face**	An insult aimed at men who are considered weak or who follow mainstream beliefs without questioning them.
	**Clown Face & World**	Suggests that society has become ridiculous or 'broken' because of feminism and progressive values.
Red Pill and Incel Terms		
	**Hot Pepper**	Sometimes used to describe an attractive woman, but often with a negative meaning, suggesting she is manipulative or dangerous.
	**Puzzle Piece**	Refers to trying to 'figure out' women or understand dating like it's a code to crack
	**Rocket**	Symbolises rising in status, wealth or power.
	**Wolf**	Represents 'lone wolf' masculinity – rejecting mainstream dating and focusing on independence.

Talking about taking risks with your teenager

Having a teenager in the family can be tough, they're not a child anymore and they're also not quite an adult. They may sometimes be moody or bad tempered, but they still need your love and support, even if they pretend they don't!

It may be hard to stop your growing teenager from taking risks or trying new experiences, especially when it's driven by peer pressure. It's best to talk to them about the risks involved in certain situations or behaviour.

Things to talk about to keep your teenager safe

Alcohol

It's worth talking to your teenager about alcohol to prevent them from drinking or curb the amount they drink, especially if they're under age.

Listen to their thoughts on drinking and don't be judgmental. You may want to mention the longterm health risks or effects drinking can have.

You should make sure they know their limits so as not to do something embarrassing that they will regret later.

If your teenager goes out and you think there will be drinking, remind them no one should be drinking and driving. To get home they must call a taxi or agree that you will collect them.

Smoking or Vaping

Your teenager may try their first cigarette or vape but let them know once they start it's hard to stop.

They may think it's cool or have seen their family members or friends smoke but it's easier not to start at all.

If your teen smokes, there is a lot of information and support available, including teen support groups.

Quitting will be hard but talk about the importance of not giving up, it's worth it to improve their health and wellbeing.

Drugs

Ask if they have been using drugs, don't panic, try and find out if they're just experimenting or have an addiction.

If they have an addiction let them know you care and support them to seek help.

Driving

Your teenager or their friends may have passed their driving test recently and got a car.

Make sure they don't mess around when it comes to driving. Remind them to drive safely, wear their seatbelt, not to use a phone while driving and not to speed or show off for the thrill of it.

If you think they're going to go out drinking, ensure they get a taxi home rather than get a lift from a drunk drive

Don't just make it a one-off conversation, keep communication ongoing.

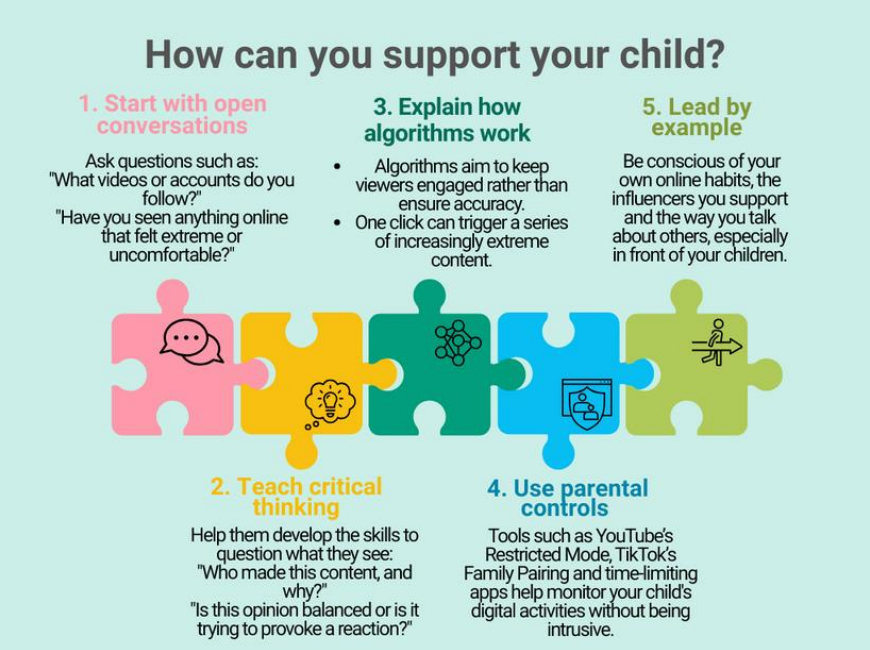
They may kick up a fuss about being old enough to look after themselves, but the truth is that teenagers don't always make the right choices.

Don't expect instant solutions If they are displaying risky behaviour, it might be they are possibly struggling with other issues such as bullying, selfesteem, friends or relationships. Let them know you are there to listen and help.

Don't try to force a conversation. It's a good idea to keep an open mind and accept that talking about difficult issues might be tricky for you both.

Sometimes the best way to help your teen is to get help and support yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for it.

Online Safety



Online Challenges

Online challenges, viral stories, hoaxes, or digital ghost stories can commonly appear online through social media or other online platforms. The 'challenges' themselves can vary but often encourage individuals to harm themselves, others, or property in the real world. They are often created to cause alarm and have been designed to seem enticing or exciting for young people.

UK Safer Internet Centre
www.saferinternet.org.uk

Best practices for parents and carers

Don't panic - Online challenges are deemed successful when they cause panic. Don't get caught up in the panic and take a step back before acting. A calm and collected manner can help prevent the spread of unnecessary worry and panic.

Don't name it - Warning others about an online challenge may seem like the smart thing to do but naming it can inadvertently direct other people towards it. Sending warnings can draw unwanted attention towards the challenge and the potential harm it can bring. Minimise the exposure and don't give your child something to look for!

Report it - Stop the spread of harm by reporting it online. Social media sites and other platforms should direct users to report content that is harmful. If you want further advice around content that is legal but harmful, visit Report Harmful Content. You should also alert relevant authorities if you are concerned about real-world offline harm that a challenge is potentially causing.

Have open conversations - Children and young people can encounter online challenges that may cause upset, they may also see challenges that may initially seem 'fun' but could actually cause real offline harm. Ensure that you or someone your child can trust is available to talk. Try to de-escalate the problem without causing more worry and know where to go for further support such as correct reporting channels, or emotional support services such as The Mix. Discussing our online lives can allow family members to feel confident to come forward for support. This can also help in preventing online challenges from growing.

Useful Safeguarding Acronyms and Vocabulary

DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead
MASH: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CP: Child Protection
CiN: Child in Need
FPT: Family Partnership Team
TAF: Team Around the Family
CEOP: Child Exploitation and On-Line Protection Centre
KCSIE: Keeping Children Safe in Education
PREVENT: Part of the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy to stop people being drawn in to extremism
CAMHs: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CHUMS: Mental Health and Wellbeing Service
SEND: Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

OPERATION ENCOMPASS
In every force. In every school. For every child.

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.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

School avoidance refers to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. In 2022-23, more than one in five children in England were found to be absent from school over 10% of the time. This guide focuses on school avoidance with an emotional basis, offering expert mental health advice. However, it's important to remember that school avoidance is a hugely subjective experience which requires a tailored, individual approach.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include tummy aches, headaches, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

MANAGE OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

Acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss coping strategies together to help them manage difficulties. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk. This helps them understand that you are working together towards a common goal, and that these strategies can be used when bigger feelings arise.

FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and spent away from screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

RECOGNISE POSITIVE STEPS

Drawing attention to a child's successes - be they big or small - can help to give them some much-needed confidence and motivation. Celebrate these daily victories - such as getting out of bed on time or completing school work - and don't hesitate to let the child know when you're impressed or proud of them. Such an approach can go a long way.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.

#WakeUpWednesday®

The National College®

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance