

## SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

Summer  
2023

Our aim is to bring you all the latest, relevant help and advice on issues that we feel will be of importance to you. We would like to bring to your attention the worrying rise in youth vaping that is taking a grip in the UK, along with latest viral challenges to be aware of together with reminders of age restrictions for social media apps and gaming platforms. We hope that you all have a restful, safe and enjoyable summer break!

### YOUTH VAPING - THE RISING TREND

Vaping appears to be everywhere nowadays. It seems you can't walk anywhere without seeing colourful advertising or catching a sickly-sweet smell in the air. While vapes (e-cigarettes) are meant to be used as a 'quit-tool' for smokers rather than a new method for non-smokers, one trend has been slowly on the rise in the last few years – youth vaping.

Ineqe have received reports across their Safer Schools community that children as young as 8 years old have been found vaping at schools across the UK. It also follows concerns from healthcare officials that youth vaping is gradually on the rise in the UK, despite selling vapes to under 18s is illegal. Online safety experts have taken a more in depth look at youth vaping and you can find more information on the potential risks and helpful tips that will help you to better understand the issue and how it might impact the young people in your care.

#### Vaping Fast Facts

- Vapes come in many shapes and sizes. Some might look like everyday items such as pens or flash drives or even hoody drawstrings!
- These 'e-cigarettes' use a heated metal coil within a covering to create inhalable vapour from a liquid form of nicotine called 'e-liquid'.
- E-liquid ('e-juice' or 'vape juice') is a formula composed of nicotine and other chemical ingredients.
- The UK government has recently called for evidence into youth vaping.



#### Red flags

Vaping can be a lot more discrete than smoking, and may be happening without a parent, carer, or teacher noticing it. There are various signs to be aware of with youth vaping, such as:

- An unexplained cough, wheeze, or shortness of breath.
- Empty disposable vapes, plastic cartridges, containers, or bottles.
- Irritable behaviour if unable to go outside or have a break.
- Sudden mood swings, frustrations, paranoia, or anxiety.
- Lingering scents that are fruity or sweet smelling.

## WARNING - TREND ON TIKTOK 'PAIN IS AN ILLUSION'

We want to make you aware of a new TikTok trend that is currently circulating on the social media app. It is called 'Pain is an Illusion' – the trend encourages people to punch walls and doors which may cause injuries to participants. The idea is that you inflict pain upon yourself by punching hard surfaces, the aim being that you show no sign of pain!

### How safe is TikTok?

Using any social network can be risky, but it's possible for young people to safely use the app with adult supervision (and a private account). TikTok has different rules for different ages:

- Users the underage of 13 can't post videos or comment, and content is curated for a younger audience.
- For age 13 to 15, accounts are private by default. Only friends can comment on videos, and other users can't duet with your videos.
- Only users aged 16 and over can livestream and use direct messaging, and only users over 18 can buy, send, or receive virtual gifts.

In March 2023, TikTok announced a time limit of 60 minutes/day on users under 18, requiring a password to be entered for further access to the platform.

### What you can do

- Use the platform yourself to get an idea of how it works.
- If a child in your care uses the platform, try using it together and have an open conversation about the content you see.
- Talk to young people about what they can do if they see anything distressing online.
- Use TikTok's safety features to limit the way a young person interacts with the app.

TikTok also offers some tools for parents and caregivers to further limit how much time kids spend on the app and what they can see. Parents and caregivers can also use **Restricted Mode** to reduce mature content, or Family Safety Mode to pair their account with their kid's account to control settings completely.

See [inege.com/tiktok](https://inege.com/tiktok) for further advice



## AGE RESTRICTION GUIDANCE

With the ever-increasing number of social media apps available and trending, it is important to remember that they DO HAVE AGE RESTRICTIONS!

As a parent/carer, it is your responsibility to be aware of the current age restrictions in place on the apps that your children are using. In school we are finding an increasing amount of time is spent dealing with social media issues that are happening out of school hours. Issues such as online bullying within group chats or inappropriate messages/language being sent/shared. A reminder that the age restriction for apps such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and TikTok is age 13+, yet we are dealing with issues from a number of year groups. We ask that you are vigilant and continuously monitor your child's social media use and also the amount of screentime.

Please see guides showing the current age restrictions for all the popular social media apps and gaming trends – **Remember, there is an age restriction for a reason!**

# YOUR SUMMER GUIDE TO POPULAR PLATFORMS

## AN ONLINE SAFETY SHAREABLE

**Messenger**

An instant messaging app developed by Meta, popular for group chats, sharing images and videos. This app is also popular for playing games with friends. Can allow young people to connect with strangers, receive message requests from strangers and video call.

16+

**Yubo**

A live-streaming platform designed to help users "meet new people" from all around the world. There have been multiple reports of young people being harassed into sending sexualised or nude images and videos.

17+

**WhatsApp**

A popular messaging platform which allows group chats, video and audio calls. WhatsApp users have been subject to scams and malware spreading through the platform.

16+

**Reddit**

A platform which allows interactions through communities and discussion forums based on particular interests. There are no age verification systems for NSFW channels and can be easily bypassed to view inappropriate content. (NSFW forums are 18+)

13+

**Kik**

A mobile messaging app which allows one-to-one chatting, group chats and anonymous chats. Since Kik allows chatting with random strangers, it leaves children open to exploitation and grooming. Once messages are deleted, they cannot be retrieved.

16+

**Telegram**

A cross-platform messaging app which allows communication between individuals, small and large groups of up to 200,000 people. The ability to connect with others in the area may lead to young people to disclose locations and personal details that could lead to grooming or harassment in-person.

16+

**Discord**

An instant messaging social platform, in which people enter 'servers' so they are part of a group - commonly used for gaming communities. Some servers are NSFW (Not safe for work - often meaning inappropriate/adult content) and may have content age-inappropriate for younger users.

13+

**Snapchat**

A popular image sharing and messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (snaps), with photo effects and filters, which disappear after a period of time. The 'disappearing snap' feature of Snapchat can lure young people into a false sense of security, and they may send images they would not normally send.

13+

**Instagram**

An image and video sharing app. Users can share content that followers can interact with by viewing, liking and commenting. Instagram may push a narrative of a 'perfect world' to young people, and they may feel pressured to post perfect, polished images of themselves.

13+

**YouTube**

A popular video sharing and social media platform. Videos can be commented on, liked and shared. Cyberbullying can occur through YouTube comments and age-inappropriate content may slip through moderation strategies deployed.

18+

**TikTok**

A free video sharing app which allows users to capture short video clips, share them and watch other user's videos or live streams. Age-inappropriate content which can be accessed through public feeds, especially any live streams. This may be unsuitable for young people and can be the origin of bullying trends.

13+

**BeReal**

A once-a-day photo sharing app - Users are given a 2-minute window to share a photo of themselves and their surroundings to their friends. If young people accept contacts they don't know, it is easy to build up a picture of routines in daily life, for example, school uniforms, bus stops and regular locations.

13+

**Twitch**

Twitch is a live streaming video platform which allows creators to broadcast and users to watch content, usually about games, including eSports. Twitch streams are often live and are therefore difficult to moderate.

13+

**NETFLIX NOW Disney+**

Streaming services which often involve paid subscriptions which offers a variety of TV shows, movies, gaming streams and more. Netflix shows such as 'Squid Game' and '13 Reasons Why' went viral and attracted the attention of young people, despite not being appropriate for under 18s. Parental controls which restrict access to age-inappropriate content e.g. profile PIN codes.

13+  
16+  
18+

**Vault Apps (Decoys)**

Apps which allow users to secretly hide photos, videos and files behind the premise of another app, for example a calculator which can only be accessed through a numeric pin code. Can become dangerous 'stash' of youth produced sexual imagery.

17+

# YOUR SUMMER GUIDE TO POPULAR GAMES



Rocket League

3

A videogame that bridges the gap between car racing, sport matches, and gladiator fights. Put simply, it's **rocket-powered cars playing an intense game of football**. Rocket League has a reputation for being a toxic environment for gamers with reports of offensive and inappropriate language filling text chats.



Fifa

3

A football simulation video game where gamers can choose to play as their favourite real-life footballers in their favourite real-life teams. FIFA is readily played by adults of all ages, meaning it would not be uncommon for a young person to interact with someone older.



Minecraft

7

An adventure game which allows players to explore and create worlds using building blocks to customise their worlds. Children and young people may experience addiction to the game due to its engaging nature.



Roblox

7

An online gaming and game creation platform. Users can play and create games for others to play. It also includes social features such as friend requests and chats where players can design an avatar and speak to others while they play. Roblox has previously faced criticism following harmful sexualised content being prevalent on the platform.



Among Us

7

An online multiplayer game which revolves around players attempting to figure out who is a friend and who is an enemy. Crewmates try to complete tasks while the Imposter aims to sabotage the mission and kill them without being found out. Risk of talking to strangers through the chat feature however there is a chat-censor feature which can be turned on to prevent this.



Poppy Playtime

12

A horror game that involves an investigation of a mystery in an abandoned toy factory. You solve puzzles to survive the "vengeful toys" left behind including 'Huggy Wuggy'. Horror games containing frightening content can cause added anxiety and stress to young people, intrusive thoughts and new fears.



Fortnite

12

An online multiplayer "shooter style" game meaning players battle it out against opponents with multiple weapon styles. It allows players to create and personalise their own game components. Persuasive design features of the game can keep children hooked, encouraging them to spend in-game currency and add to their screen time.



Overwatch

12

A team-based game starring a cast of powerful heroes. Players can travel the world and build teams together. Overwatch has been included in eSports competitions and has scenes of blood, tobacco use and violence.



League of Legends

12

A team-based strategy game where two teams of five champions face off to destroy the other's base. Children may be exposed to bad language, hate speech, insults, and sexual language.



Apex Legends

16

A free-to-play shooter type game with the objective of being the last team standing by collecting loot and fighting enemy squads. It includes some violence and players may talk to others through voice and text chat.



Elden Ring

16

An action role-playing game in a world of different characters. You can explore the world, grow in strength and fight or ally those you meet. It features strong violence involving both human and fantasy characters, which can be deemed age-inappropriate for younger players.



Grand Theft Auto

18

An action-adventure game in which players complete missions to progress through the story. Children will be subjected to profanity, violence, sex, crime and other mature themes.



Call of Duty

18

A series of first person shooter games including 'Modern Warfare', 'Black Ops', 'Vanguard' and 'Warzone'. Involves live user interaction - squads can be made up of friends or players from all over the world.

Horizon Worlds

18



A virtual social space which consists of a catalogue of virtual experiences through the Metaverse.

There have been several reported incidents of users experiencing sexual harassment while using the platform.



Avakin Life

18+

A virtual 3D gaming world where users create their own character by choosing outfits and interacting with others at different in-game locations. Users can easily access children and young people online via private and public chats.

## OMEGLE GUIDANCE



### WHAT IS OMEGLE?

Omegle is one of the more popular video chat sites available online. It pairs random users identified as 'You' and 'Stranger' to chat online via 'Text', 'Video' or both. A user can choose to add their interests, and Omegle will try to pair a user with someone who has similar interests. If not, you could meet anyone. Chats are anonymous unless the user states who they are. It has been around for about 15 years and has been a concern for experts trying to protect children. It's free, and no account sign up or registration is required. This has the risk of allowing under-18s to easily use the platform, without needing parental assistance, money or even an email address.

Like most social media sites Omegle has a minimum age rating of 13 years with parental permission, users must be over 18 years old without parental permission. It is extremely popular among children and young people because a lot of social media influencers use and post about it. For example, the #omegle hashtag has approximately 5 billion views on TikTok.

There are no parental controls - according to Omegle, they monitor conversations, but despite stating 'video is monitored, keep it clean', children and young people visiting this section are likely to encounter numerous other users engaging in sexually explicit chat and activity putting them at risk.

#### For further advice:

Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-omegle-what-parents-need-to-know/>

Childline: <https://www.childnet.com/blog/what-is-omegle-key-things-parents-and-carers-need-to-know/>



# PARENTAL ON-LINE SAFETY TIPS

With the technological advances that had to be made during the lockdown periods, learning from home was forced to be increased. This meant that young people were spending a lot more time online doing their schoolwork, gaming, and socialising. However, it's important we all consider how we can help keep young people safer online. Here's some information about what your child may enjoy online and what you can do to help keep them safer!

## Online gaming

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play.

For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect your child, watch this short video:

**[In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers](#)**

## Sharing images and videos

Young people often share images or 'selfies' and there is potential for some of those to be nude or nearly nude images. Young people share 'nudes' for a number of different reasons, and some situations are riskier than others.

For information about the contexts in which images are shared and how best to respond, take a look at **[nude selfies: a parent's guide](#)**.

## More information?

Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency's Child Protection Command CEOP (NCA-CEOP). Their aim is to protect children and young people from sexual abuse online.

For more information, advice and guidance, visit their [parents website](#) and download their [home activity worksheets](#) for fun, online safety activities to do with your family.

## Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online

**Have an ongoing conversation:** Continue to talk about the apps, games and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report.

For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

**Make sure they know where to go for support:** Remind your child they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. Remind them that they won't be in trouble and that you are there to help. For a breakdown of report services, visit:

[Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)

**Make sure they know about NCA CEOP:** Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.



**NSPCC**

**Dedicated Helpline  
0800 136 663**

This new dedicated helpline provides support to both children and adults who have experienced sexual abuse in educational settings or has concerns about someone or the issues raised. Support and advice include how to contact the police and report crimes if they wish.

The helpline will also provide support to parents too. More information is available at

[Dedicated helpline for victims of abuse in schools](#)  
[NSPCC](#)



**stop it now!** UK & Ireland  
Together we can prevent child sexual abuse

### [Stop It Now! UK and Ireland](#)

encourages adults to create a society that no longer tolerates the sexual abuse of children. There is a confidential and anonymous helpline and email service – **0808 1000 900** or live chat, secure email if you are not ready to speak to someone on the phone.

Click the following links:

[Live chat - Stop It Now](#)  
[Stop It Now! Secure email](#)

## Parents/Carers Learning Programme

### Sexual Abuse Learning Programme (Parents Protect)

Parents Protect has developed this online child sexual abuse and exploitation awareness learning programme for parents/carers and professionals to help:

- Understand potential risks
- Recognise the signs of possible abuse in children
- Beware of inappropriate behaviour in adults
- Know where to go for help if you have concerns and would like to talk about them

Click here: [Sexual Abuse Learning Programme - Parents Protect](#)



**Parents Protect**

Together we can prevent  
child sexual abuse

## Online Grooming



IWF safety campaign aims to help parents have conversations with their children about keeping their 'door' closed to child sexual abusers. The campaign includes a booklet for parents, explaining the risks, explaining why children are vulnerable, and suggests practical steps that parents can take.

**TALK** to your child about online sexual abuse. Start the conversation – and listen to their concerns.

**AGREE** ground rules about the way you use technology.

**LEARN** about the platforms and apps your child loves.

**KNOW** how to use tools, apps and settings that can help to keep your child safe online.

For further details go to: <https://talk.iwf.org.uk/>



## USEFUL ON-LINE

### SAFETY WEBSITES

**National Online Safety – safety guides on ALL aspects of internet use**

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/>

**Internet Matters – wide range of online safety advice for parents to keep their children safe on-line.**

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

## Safeguarding Team

The Graham James Safeguarding Team has been trained to an advanced level on all aspects of safeguarding. The team is available to any student, parent, or school staff member to discuss and report any safeguarding concerns.

### Designated Safeguarding Lead -

Mrs. J Conroy

### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads –

Mrs. K Lane, Mrs P. Back and Mr C. Mead

### Mental Health Lead

Mrs. E McIlroy

## PARENTAL SUPPORT

YOUNG  
MINDS

During these tough times, parents find themselves pulled in many different directions. Concerns about family, work, and possible financial worries, make for a stressful household. **Young Minds** have created a useful 'Supporting Parents Help Finder'. By answering six questions, parents can find out how to support their child's mental health.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/>

## Childnet – SEND Children

There are relatively few resources to help children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Childnet has created a set of free, adaptable resources that cover the important topics of healthy relationships, digital wellbeing and online pornography and are designed to equip and enable parents and carers, to support young people aged 11 and over with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

[Parents and Carers Toolkit](#) | [Childnet](#)

## PARENTING SMART (Place2Be)

The children's mental health charity, Place2Be, has launched a new website aimed at helping parents with typical situations they may experience with children.

Advice can be found on over forty topics inc:

*Understanding sibling rivalry*

*My child is lying, what does it mean, what should I do?*

*My child has trouble going to sleep*

*My child says, 'I hate you!' Cultural identity: who am I?*



The Parenting Smart website can be found here:

<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>

## EAL RESOURCES FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Leaflets available in other languages here

<https://www.childnet.com/resources/supporting-young-people-online>

Arabic  
Somali  
Farsi  
Urdu  
Polish

Punjabi  
English  
Turkish  
Hindi  
Welsh

Bengali  
Spanish  
French  
Vietnamese

THURROCK LOCAL  
SAFEGUARDING  
CHILDREN  
PARTNERSHIP



<https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/professionals/online-exploitation>

<https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/professionals/campaign-podcasts-and-videos>

<https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/parents-carers/awareness-raising-sessions-for-parents>



