



Spotlight on Safeguarding

Dear Parents / Carers

This month has seen two big events in the safeguarding calendar. Across school we have explored a range of different activities to promote both children's mental health week and Safer Internet day 2024. This edition of the newsletter will focus on both of these topics and provide signposts to where you can find further information.

Below are some services available to provide children with mental health support:

For children in crisis, you can call the Crisis Line on 0800 051 1508.



www.kooth.com

A free, anonymous instant messaging service for young people



www.youngminds.org.uk

The Young Minds website contains lots of resources, real life stories and signposts to support children with mental health difficulties

WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Children's mental health week.
- Safer Internet Day

CHILDREN'S
MENTAL
HEALTH
WEEK 2024



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

1 in 6 children now have a diagnosable mental health condition. By taking part in Children's Mental Health Week we can help ensure that children and young people across the UK feel listened to and know that they're not alone

Did you know?

In the average primary school class, at least two children have suffered abuse or neglect which is why the NSPCC have developed the 'Speak out. Stay safe' programme which empowers staff to tackle difficult topics with their pupils and helps children understand:

- Abuse in all its forms and the signs of abuse
- Abuse is never a child's fault
- Sources of help available to them, including Childline



Online Safety advice for Early Years

Internet Matters have teamed up with EE to create 'Online Safety Starts Early.' This is a 4-episode series, for those with children in Early Years. Episode one highlights how to create positive habits from the beginning and then provides links to additional resources.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/0-5/online-safety-video-guidesearly-years/>



Online Safety

Safer Internet Day aims to raise awareness about the importance of online safety for students. This global event, celebrated on the 6th of February, promotes the responsible and safe use of the internet among young people. As the internet becomes more important to us and our children as a social space, it is important to develop a sense of how we can all use it to support our lives, but at the same time to guard against the negative influences that exist there.



**NATIONAL ONLINE
SAFETY APP**

This is an app created and developed by experts to provide you with online safety knowledge to keep your children safe. It also has courses, videos, webinars and guides on topics so you can stay in the know.

Download for Apple:
hubs.ly/H0BwQjL0

Download for Android:
hubs.ly/H0Bx0tp0



If you would like to find out more about online safety, please access the recommended links below:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
<https://www.internetmatters.org/>
<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>
<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents>
<https://www.childnet.com/>
<https://saferinternet.org.uk/>

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthral young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: Involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



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#WakeUpWednesday

Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-53245925>
<https://prosocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>