

Safeguarding News



Online Safety

When crisis strikes, it is often children who suffer first and foremost. COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 11th March 2020. As the crisis deepened, countries introduced unprecedented restrictions to combat the spread of the virus, meaning that whole populations were placed in lockdown and when these have been lifted further restrictions have been implemented. In the face of these restrictions, and to maintain some form of normality, most turned to technology and the internet for work, socialising, entertainment and learning.

The internet and online technology provides new opportunities for young people's learning and growth, but it can also expose them to new types of risks.

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What should staff know?

Being online is an integral part of children and young people's lives. Social media, online games, websites and apps can be accessed through mobile phones, computers, laptops and tablets all of which form a part of children and young people's online world.

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020)

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child sexual exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation: technology often provides a platform that can facilitate harm.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults; and
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

Current Threats

Hundreds of thousands of children and young people have been affected by school closures. Many of these students are now taking classes as well as socialising more online. “Under the shadow of COVID-19, the lives of most children have temporarily shrunk to just their homes and their screens. Spending more time on virtual platforms can leave children vulnerable to online sexual exploitation and grooming, as predators look to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of face-to-face contact with friends and partners may lead to heightened risk-taking such as sending sexualised images, while increased and unstructured time online may expose children and young people to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyberbullying.

Some children may have only limited access to the internet at home. This may impact their level and quality of education, their contact with friends and wider family, and potentially affect their mental health.

There are several websites that contain information, guidance and resources for staff, students and parents/carers on current threats and concerns which are updated regularly. These include;

<https://www.childnet.com/>

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

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/>

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

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://educateagainsthate.com/>

<https://www.e4education.co.uk/esafety-whats-the-advice>

Advice on key topics

I want to know more about...



Online Scams

Whilst older adults are often thought of as the main targets of online scams, children are very vulnerable to them as well. Common scams include emails claiming you've won large sums of money and requesting payments to receive said "winnings," websites offering something for a low price but never explaining what it is exactly; and essentially anything that's extremely cheap or free. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Staff Safety

With previous lockdowns, further restrictions and now the current lockdown remote learning is becoming the norm. It is important that you follow the guidance that your academies have provided and understand the procedures of how to report any concerns that may arise. It is also important to understand that staff are also currently restricted to activities and this means that many of us are spending more time online which potentially puts us at risk of some of the threats that students are facing. Please remember that you can speak to a member of your safeguarding team and the CLF also offer support to staff through the CLF Employee Assistance Programme Tel 0800 030 5182 or you can link to the mental health and well-being blog and Thrive app for support with balancing a range of priorities and needs during these uncertain times.

For further information or guidance, on any of the topics covered in this newsletter or any safeguarding concerns please contact a member of your academy safeguarding team.