



SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN

Now that everyone has had time to settle into the Autumn term, I felt it was a good time to send on some interesting articles, guides and updates from the world of safeguarding and well-being. I hope these may be of interest but as ever, if you would like any further advice or support, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Please note all 'Wake Up Wednesday' guides are downloaded and attached to this email.



Instagram Safety Tools - Do They Work?

Meta, as well as others, have been rolling out more and more safety tools in the last year as legislation around the world is starting to hold tech companies to account for allowing. Over the coming weeks a new tool is being rolled out by Meta (onto Instagram) which [bans under 16's from live-streaming](#).

But do these tools work?

According to some recent studies, the answer is no. In fact, according to a Meta whistleblower, around two thirds of the safety tools were found to be ineffective stating, "although Meta consistently makes promises about how its teen accounts protect children from sensitive or harmful content, inappropriate contact, harmful interactions, these safety tools are mostly ineffective, unmaintained, quietly changed or removed."

This is really damning: it's a concern for parents who rely on these tools, it's a concern for professionals who teach young people about these so-called safety tools.

You can read a brief report in The Guardian [HERE](#), the full report 'Teen Accounts, Broken Promises' can be found [HERE](#).

Struggling students face smartphone dangers

[BBC News](#)

A study by the University of the West of England reveals that struggling students are more exposed to harmful smartphone content than their peers. The survey involved 3,721 secondary school pupils, over 1,500 parents, and 352 teachers. Dr Ben Knight from UWE Bristol's School of Education and Childhood stated that struggling pupils are "particularly vulnerable to the most troubling dimensions of smartphone use." The study found a disconnect between parents' perceptions and the reality of their children's experiences, with many parents underestimating the harmful content their children encounter.

Smartphone use a safeguarding issue, say Conservatives

[Daily Express](#)

Shadow education secretary Laura Trott has renewed calls for a national smartphone ban in schools, writing to Ofsted chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver to argue that schools "should fail the safeguarding check if smartphones are present for students during the school day". Ms Trott argued that current Ofsted guidance on smartphones "does not go far enough", writing: "I strongly believe that headteachers and school leaders are best placed to make decisions for their schools. But when we know that smartphone use puts children at risk, it must be recognised and treated as a safeguarding issue, not just a matter of behaviour policy or at school discretion."

'Urgent action' needed to keep children out of drug gangs

[Sunday Express](#)

Former Children's Commissioner for England Baroness Longfield has called for "urgent action" from the Government to address the growing number of children being drawn into organised crime - with children as young as 13 now running county lines drug operations in some areas. While the number of children referred for criminal exploitation has risen by 50% in two years, to 15,700, Baroness Longfield says these figures are "the tip of the iceberg", with many children involved in county lines gangs never officially flagged. The Baroness's charity, the Commission on Young Lives, has called for a national "Sure Start Plus" programme for teenagers, for new laws to punish child exploitation more harshly, and for an end to the "culture of exclusion" in schools, particularly for primary pupils.

Schools urged not to become 'therapeutic institutions'

[The Sunday Times](#)

Former Ofsted chief inspector Baroness Spielman has urged schools to refocus themselves on core academic and extracurricular activities and warned against conceiving of themselves as "therapeutic institutions". If they do so, she suggests, "and are looking for things to be wrong with the child, they'll probably find some. And we'll stay in this sort of negative spiral of unintentionally encouraging children to find things to be unhappy about." The danger, she argues, is that "you get into a downward spiral where the more of that kind of [mental health] support you give to a child, the more you reinforce the idea that they can't cope without it". By contrast, she stresses the importance of extracurricular activities, saying that not "just learning in the narrowest sense of English and maths but structuring good experiences for children in choirs and orchestras and sports activities, as well as good lessons ... all the things that really do enrich education and contribute to children's wellbeing".

The Problem with Boys?

This is an article from Stephen Hall in relation to the drama series Adolescence, Incel culture, the manosphere and algorithms. The latter, algorithms, is a subject I speak a lot about with children and young people, as far as I'm concerned it is one of the most important aspects to understand about modern-day online life as algorithms are potentially a gateway to so much harm, creating filter bubbles or echo chambers and distorting beliefs or reality.

The article states quote "High profile TV dramas can spark debate, but debate without depth risks deepening stigma" unquote. If we are to educate our young people we need to know the facts, not the dramatisation.

It's a really interesting article which you can find [HERE](#) (note: this is a LinkedIn article) and it also points to some research from Dublin City University [HERE](#) and a Problem with Boys report [HERE](#).

Managing In-Game Spending ££££££££££

In-game spending can be problematic with some children and young people. The urgency to level up, to look unique, to be better than your friends, and to top all this off the persuasive techniques that games companies use.

Internet Matters have an excellent guide for parents which includes:

How do children spend money while gaming.

How does in-game currency work.

The benefits and risks

Supporting resources, and more.

You can view the guide [HERE](#).

New research programme aims for healthier school meals

The / London Evening Standard

Researchers have launched a national programme to improve the UK's food system, focusing on healthier options in schools, hospitals, and communities. Funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) with £47.5m, the initiative aims to tackle diet-related deaths and carbon emissions. Incorporating more beans into school meals can improve health and environmental outcomes, with evidence suggesting a daily increase of 34 grams per person could prevent over 5,000 deaths annually and save 15% in carbon emissions. Initiatives like fruit and vegetable voucher schemes and the development of a new fish product aimed at reducing waste and supporting local fisheries were also explored.



Violence among young people is a growing concern – but we're not powerless to act. Our latest #WakeUpWednesday guide unpacks the causes and signs of youth violence, including when and where it's most likely to happen. It also offers compassionate, practical advice for parents, carers and educators.

Lib Dems propose social media limits for children

The Times

The Liberal Democrats say children should have a two-hour limit on TikTok-style video viewing, citing research showing that excessive phone use is linked to negative behaviour. Victoria Collins, the party's science spokeswoman, says it is imperative for children to understand the risks of social media, comparing it to cigarettes and alcohol and warning that excessive use of apps exposes children to mental health issues. The Labour Government is contemplating a daily two-hour limit on social media use for children, with a formal announcement expected soon. A curfew during nighttime or school hours is also under consideration. A Government spokesman acknowledged concerns regarding excessive social media use and highlighted the Online Safety Act's mandate for age-appropriate online experiences for children.

Schools 'cannot shoulder burden alone' to support pupils

[The Independent UK](#)

A new report from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has warned that schools, whose budgets are already under pressure, are being expected to shoulder an increasingly wide burden in providing support to pupils with a growing range of additional needs. The NFER found that seven in 10 teachers say they receive insufficient support from support services ranging from physical and mental health services to council services and services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). NFER research director Jenna Julius said schools "are taking significant steps to support pupils and staff, but they cannot shoulder the burden alone". NAHT general secretary Paul Whiteman said while schools "do their best to support children", where "the support required lies outside education, it can be difficult for them to access help from community services including social care and mental health which have been under-funded over the last decade".

Brighton Council advises against early smartphone use

[BBC News](#)

Brighton & Hove City Council has advised parents against giving smartphones to children until they are 14. Emma Daniel, cabinet member for children, families and youth services, highlighted the risks of criminal sexual exploitation, saying: "The dangers to your child are so great that it's now come to a point where we have to say to parents that it isn't safe." Four primary schools in the city have prohibited smartphones, while three secondary schools now require students to place their phones in lockable pouches at the start of each day.



With Snapchat's ever-evolving features, it's essential for parents and educators to stay informed about new and emerging safeguarding risks 🧡 From AI chatbots to paid content options, this week's #WakeUpWednesday guide takes a closer look at the platform's most pressing dangers – plus the latest updates to be aware of 📱💡

Location Sharing

We all know that location sharing can be a really good thing, but only when that sharing is managed appropriately and only with very specific known persons, not to everyone. Thankfully, gone are the days when you uploaded a post onto social media your location was automatically included, but there are still location sharing features in some apps. As a timely reminder for parents to check their child's device the Canadian Cyber Tip Line has put together a very informative article which is useful for everyone, regardless of where you are in the world.

You can find the article [HERE](#).

For Parents - Roblox Update

As the most popular game on the planet with children, Roblox gets a lot of coverage and understandably so. It's an amazing platform to explore but it isn't without its faults, some of which are very significant.

In April 2025 Revealing Reality carried out an investigation into Roblox due to serious concerns of what children were experiencing within the game (link [HERE](#)). In September they carried out a follow-up investigation to see what, if anything had changed.

In short, quite a lot has changed, such as:

Adjustments to content maturity ratings.

ID verification for certain games and experiences.

Stricter moderation

Enhanced parental controls.

These are good but, according to Revealing Reality, they don't go far enough. There are still workarounds and very significant concerns. It's worth having a read of the full report which you can find [HERE](#).

Children as young as 13 using ketamine in schools

Manchester Evening News

The *Manchester Evening News* talks to youth workers and experts about a growing trend of children as young as 13 using ketamine in school toilets, parks, and Piccadilly Gardens. Glynn Potts, CEO of the Greater Manchester Youth Federation, says ketamine "is incredibly cheap and really easy to obtain", having taken over from vapes loaded with Spice as one of the biggest concerns. Professor Rob Ralphs, who works on the GM Trends study, says it could be argued that "ketamine is the drug of choice for this Covid generation", and that if "the motivation for taking it is about self medicating anxiety or depression or loneliness, people are using it more on a daily basis".

Toothbrushes handed out to tackle 'Dickensian' tooth decay figures

Daily Mirror

Dentistry minister Stephen Kinnock has said that free toothbrushes and toothpaste are being given to around 600,000 children aged three to five at day nurseries, pre-schools and school reception classes, building on existing supervised brushing schemes in schools in more deprived areas. Mr Kinnock said it is "Dickensian that a third of five-year-olds in the most deprived areas of this country have suffered tooth decay, and that children are most commonly admitted to hospital to get their teeth removed". Dr Oosh Devalia, president of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry, welcomed progress on supervised tooth-brushing, but warned there is "still much to do to reach all the children who need this support".

Experts warn of measles spike as schools reopen

The I

Scientists have warned that measles cases may rise as schools reopen. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reported 742 confirmed cases by 18 August, but the actual number is likely higher due to unrecorded cases. Professor Steve Griffin from the University of Leeds stated: "The decline in vaccine coverage combined with increased mixing at school and university is almost certainly going to increase the likelihood of outbreaks."

White paper to set out school communication guidelines

The Times

The *Times* reports that Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson is to launch a white paper this autumn setting out expectations around how schools communicate with families, in order to repair what she sees as a deterioration in relationships with parents since the pandemic. Ms Phillipson says the white paper "will set out plans to establish, for the first time, clear expectations of schools for parental engagement so that families can be clear on what they should expect from schools" and schools "can be clear on what they should expect from families". The guidelines, she said, "will cover how the school will deliver a universal offer for all parents - things like how and when they'll be in touch, how and when they'll share data, support with home learning, involvement in school life, how parents can work with the school to support children moving from one stage of their learning to another".

Rethinking Masculinity and Mental Health - Harmless

In male culture showing emotion, crying for example, is seen as a relative taboo. Other outpourings of emotion; anger, sadness or seriousness, is generally discouraged. However, this creates a restrictive environment for males and breeds into their relations, a prohibitive social expectation over emotional engagement. The penalties for breaking this taboo can be bullying or physical abuse within intra-male relations. Psychologically this produces harmful mental effects that can impinge on development and social relations. The Harmless Organisation has recently published an exploration of this phenomenon and its related issues over on their site. If interested, please follow the link: <https://harmless.org.uk/boys-dont-cry-rethinking-masculinity-and-mental-health/>

Omegle V2?

Remember Omegle? That vile website which allowed anyone to talk with anyone live on camera and was the direct cause for so much child harm. It was eventually ordered to be taken down by a judge in the US last year.

Now there's OmeTV (Omegle TV). I don't know how long this has been out, at least a year, and unsurprisingly it's hitting the headlines. Rated at 18+ in the Google Play Store (link [HERE](#)) and 17+ in the Apple App Store with no safeguards whatsoever in place, it's another one of these chat apps which matches the user with complete strangers and a significant risk to children.

Definitely one to keep an eye on and good to see the e-Safety Commissioner in Australia is [taking enforcement action](#).

Talking to your Child about Online Safety

It's the area that a lot of parents struggle with yet it is the single most important aspect for any child of any age - continuing conversations with children to mitigate risk, including topics that can be very difficult to approach.

The NSPCC has some wonderful resources for parents including age-appropriate conversations and topics, top tips, quizzes and more. There's a lot of information and my tip would be to send out snippets of information, perhaps in your newsletter. For example you could say that in lessons with the children you've been having some lessons around how to stay safe online (with specific topics), then send out information just related to that topic. Parents are much more likely to read that, which in turn means they're more likely to talk to their children about it.

You can find all the resources listed [HERE](#).

Late-night gaming impacts school attendance

[The Daily Telegraph](#) [The Times](#)

Research indicates that late-night gaming and group chats are contributing to student fatigue and subsequent absence from school, with truancy becoming a normalised behaviour for teenagers. Focus groups with 14- and 15-year-olds revealed that digital "presenteeism" outside school hours drives real-world school absence, challenging daily attendance as a given. The report, by Public First for charity Impetus, suggests that while punitive measures like fines may compel attendance short-term, they risk alienating students. Recommendations include safeguarding school time for social interaction, expanding extracurricular activities as core components of school life, and establishing national guidelines for healthy technology use outside school to address the 24/7 online culture.

New parenting classes proposed for truancy

[The Sunday Times](#)

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson is considering proposals, including "attendance awareness courses" for parents of truanting pupils, modelled after speed awareness classes, to address rising school absence rates. The measures are expected to be outlined in an autumn white paper aimed at repairing the parent-school relationship. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) report, which advocates for these courses and a potential £200 fine for non-compliance, highlights the significant social and economic costs of persistent school absence. The CSJ study found that nearly half of parents view missing one in ten school days as reasonable, and 42% of secondary school parents doubt the relevance of school teachings.

Child hunger crisis deepens in UK

[Daily Mail](#) [The Independent UK](#)

Research from the Trussell charity reveals that 27% of children in the UK live in food insecure households. The report, titled *Hunger in the UK*, highlights that 31% of children aged five and under are particularly affected. The number of people facing food insecurity has risen from 11.6m in 2022 to 14.1m in 2024. Trussell advocates for the removal of the two-child benefit cap, which could alleviate severe hardship for 670,000 individuals, including 470,000 children. Helen Barnard, director at Trussell, stated: "Hunger and hardship are increasingly seen as a normal part of everyday life in the UK."

Chatbots endanger children 'every five minutes'

[Sky News](#)

A new report alleges that chatbots on Character.ai, a popular platform featuring AI personas of celebrities and fictional characters, are exposing children to harmful content, including sexual grooming, manipulation, and violence, at a rate of once every five minutes. Two charities, ParentsTogether Action and Heat Initiative, conducted 50 hours of testing with accounts registered to users aged 13-17, identifying 669 instances of inappropriate interactions. Examples include a teacher bot confessing romantic feelings to a 12-year-old and a bot impersonating a comedian using offensive language towards a transgender teen. The findings have led the charities to call for a ban on under-18s using the platform. Character.ai states it has invested significantly in trust and safety.

Social media blamed for youth violence surge

[The Sunday Telegraph](#)

The NASUWT has warned that social media is contributing to a rise in youth violence, including knife crime, while teachers are experiencing increased threats and assaults in classrooms. At the TUC Congress in Brighton, general secretary Matt Wrack said: "Teachers are being threatened, assaulted and traumatised – and social media pours fuel on the fire." He emphasised the need for stronger regulation of violent content and accountability for social media platforms.



With over 60% of children and young people regularly feeling overwhelmed, it's never been more important to support them in managing stress as they head back to school. This week's #WakeUpWednesday guide highlights 10 top tips – from spotting early signs to encouraging healthy sleep patterns – that can make a meaningful difference 💚

Designed for parents and educators alike, the guide outlines how small, everyday actions can help young people feel more in control. It's a valuable resource to keep stress in check and nurture emotional resilience 🙌

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about EA SPORTS FC 26



Our guide looks at the risks surrounding EA Sports FC 26 and our top tips to minimise them. This marks the third year since EA left the FIFA licence, and the game is mostly unchanged from last year. While Kick-Off mode is great for playing with friends and Career Mode allows players to fulfil long-term ambitions as a manager or player, Ultimate Team remains the main draw for many players – and it can get out of hand in terms of how much money players can invest.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AN ANNUAL RELEASE SCHEDULE

As was the case with the last two EA Sports FC games and the FIFA series before it, the franchise rolls out once a year with updated squads and new features. This can make it expensive to keep up with, particularly when so many dedicated players are keen to get their hands on the latest edition.



VOICE CHAT

Voice chat can be enabled across all platforms, meaning young people can speak to anyone they play with or against. While it can be switched off, some children will no doubt want to speak to their friends while they play. This also means they may encounter strangers much older than them, which can expose them to inappropriate language or behaviours.



IN-GAME PURCHASES THROUGH ULTIMATE TEAM

Ultimate Team is the big draw for EA Sports FC, letting players spend real money on packs that they can open to build a squad of the world's best players. They're not always easy to obtain, and new, improved versions of players will be regularly added as limited-time offerings. Young people could feel pressured into spending money and experience fear of missing out.



SCAMMERS IN ULTIMATE TEAM

Ultimate Team is managed by EA itself, but that hasn't stopped scammers from looking to dupe players out of money and in-game coins. Some scammers sell their accounts, which is a violation of EA's terms of service, while others will 'sell' coins – something the developer is still working to crack down on. Some try to gain access to others' accounts, potentially giving them access to payment information.



POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION

While EA Sports FC is potentially addictive, thanks to its fast-paced gameplay and mirroring of the real-world skill and glamour of football, Ultimate Team's focus on limited-time rewards and the lottery of winning packs can make it feel closer to gambling than gaming, which may lead to addiction and impulsive spending of money.



Advice for Parents & Educators

PREPARE FOR ANOTHER GAME IN A YEAR

The annual-release cadence aligns with the return of the school year, and can be a great way to incentivise good behaviour at the start of term. If children are applying themselves and preparing for a new year of school, or were particularly well behaved in the summer, EA Sports FC 26 could make a great reward.



LIMIT SPENDING

If you're worried about children accidentally spending real money in Ultimate Team, whether in game or on the EA Sports FC companion app, don't link a payment card to their account. Reclaiming funds can be a mountain to climb, and the dopamine hit of opening flashy packs with slick animations means one purchase can lead to another very quickly. It's also worth adding a prepaid card if you'd prefer them to make their own choices with their budget.



MONITOR VOICE CHAT

As in-game chat is open, be sure to adjust the settings in EA Sports FC 26 to lock it down. If children want to chat with their friends while they play, consider setting up a safe space for them to call, to allow them to play without fear of outsiders.



BE VIGILANT

As with last year, there are ways to keep scammers at bay. Ensure passwords are locked down, and consider using a password manager application to keep them secure. EA will never contact players through the game itself, so be vigilant with incoming messages, and block and report suspected spam. EA will contact players by email if needed, but they will never ask for usernames or passwords. Players should also avoid buying in-game currency from unofficial websites – doing so can lead to accounts being banned and could cost players money in the process.



Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is an experienced freelance writer and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for seven years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. He's also a tech and fitness writer and has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about YOUTH VIOLENCE

Youth violence affects one in four children in the UK, but it doesn't have to. When parents, carers, and educators understand the risks, they're better placed to support young people. The right support, mentoring, therapy, and guidance can help young people affected by violence to feel safe, manage conflict, and make positive choices.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH VIOLENCE

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT SERIOUS VIOLENCE?

A recent study surveyed over 10,000 young people affected by violence, asking why serious violence occurs among their peers, such as an assault involving a weapon or sexual violence. The most common reasons given were due to a personal characteristic of the victim e.g., race, religion, sexuality, gender, a gang or school rivalry, and being provoked. While not all young people face these issues, many lack the emotional regulation skills needed to manage provocation.

WHAT ARE SIGNS A YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK?

Children and young people often express that something is wrong through behaviour rather than words. Be alert to signs such as sudden mood changes, secrecy around friendships, excessive phone use, unfamiliar slang, unexplained injuries, fear of school, aggression, going missing, or substance use. They may also be associating with older peers. These behaviours can indicate underlying issues that can lead to violence.

ONLINE INFLUENCES

Social media plays a powerful role in normalising and escalating violence. Platforms like TikTok and Snapchat can expose young people to harmful content, often shaped by algorithms. Many see violent material that distorts reality, leading to fear and desensitisation. A recent study found 70% had seen real-world violence online, and 80% felt less safe in their communities. Alarming, 39% said it made them more likely to carry a weapon. Online conflict can often spill into real life, with serious and sometimes tragic consequences.

WHEN IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

For children and young people in England and Wales, the hours between 4 pm and 8 pm – just after school – carry a particularly high risk for serious violence. This can stem from conflicts that escalate during the school day, online arguments, or simply moving through unfamiliar areas on the way home. Understanding this risk helps us support safer travel and routines. Our recent report found that over one in three young people don't feel safe in the area they live in, and 36% don't feel safe walking the streets.

WHY MIGHT A YOUNG PERSON CARRY A WEAPON?

Young people may carry weapons due to fear, threats, peer pressure, or a false sense of protection. Many young people tell us they feel unsafe and carry weapons 'just in case', while others may be influenced by social media, peers, or criminal activity. Some don't realise it's illegal or may believe it earns respect.

WHERE IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

Violence often happens in certain places. Busy areas like transport hubs carry risk simply because lots of people gather there. Other hotspots, like places linked to drug activity, attract those more likely to be involved in violence. Some areas become risky due to poor supervision, such as under-resourced public spaces. Understanding where violence tends to occur helps us guide young people safely through their communities and advocate for better support and safer spaces.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT STAYING SAFE

Choose a safe moment for the conversation, emotionally and physically. If a child is upset or angry, help them settle before discussing serious topics. Listen actively without judgement, even if what they share is difficult. Avoid interrupting and offer advice when the time feels right. If you're worried, you're not alone; support is available.

AVOID CONFLICT & MANAGE ESCALATIONS

Encourage young people to consider the 'Safe T's' – Trust instincts, Take a breath, and Talk to a trusted adult. When triggered or provoked, they may react from their 'survival brain', unable to think clearly about the consequences. Taking a breath helps calm, and helps them access their 'thinking brain'. Remind them that moments pass, and seeking support from trusted adults builds resilience and safer decision-making.

HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND CONSEQUENCES

Young people can be searched by police or teachers if suspected of carrying a weapon. If found with a knife, they could face arrest and criminal proceedings. A conviction can result in a criminal record. Even being present during a violent assault, encouraging it, filming, or sharing footage can lead to prosecution. Open and honest conversations can help children understand these risks and make safer choices.

REPORT INFORMATION

We all have a role in preventing violence. If a child shares concerns, you can act. For educators, it's important to follow your school's safeguarding procedures. Other adults can report anonymously through Fearless or Crimestoppers, and speak with other parents, the school, or local police through 101. If someone is in immediate danger, always call 999. These steps help protect children and the wider community.

Meet Our Expert

The Ben Kinsella Trust is a UK anti-knife crime charity educating young people through immersive workshops, awareness campaigns, and community resources. Visit: benkinsella.org.uk

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/youth-violence>

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Snapchat's use of artificial intelligence (AI) includes features like the 'My AI' chatbot and AI-powered filters, offering interactive experiences that can be fun but also pose risks. These tools may share unfiltered or inaccurate responses, promote unrealistic beauty standards, and collect personal data. Advanced filters and deepfake-style lenses can distort reality, potentially leading to manipulation, impersonation, or inappropriate content.

SCREEN ADDICTION

Snapchat boosts user engagement and daily use with features like streaks (daily Snapchat exchanges between you and a friend). When a streak's been going for a few days, users will see a 🔥 emoji. The number alongside it shows the number of days, but if users miss a day and break the streak, the only way to restore it is to pay. This encourages daily use habits, and frequent notifications can keep users returning to the app even more often.

SEXTORTION

Because Snapchat's disappearing messages feature may foster a sense of safety, users may become targets of sextortion. For example, a predator may pressure someone into sending nude images, then somehow capture those images to threaten and intimidate the victim. This might involve claiming they will share the images with friends or family unless money is paid.

SNAPCHAT+

Snapchat+ is the platform's premium subscription service, offering early access to new and exclusive features. In June 2025, Snapchat introduced a new tier called Lens+, giving subscribers access to hundreds of lenses and AR experiences for playing, creating, and sharing Snaps. These paid features may encourage young users to spend money to access exclusive content, increasing the risk of overspending or feeling pressured to make in-app purchases.

ACCESSIBILITY

Snapchat is now accessible from a web browser, meaning children can use it on a laptop or tablet without downloading the app. This can make activity harder to monitor, reduce the effectiveness of parental controls, and increase the risk of unsupervised communication or exposure to inappropriate content.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat isn't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's disappearing messages feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ACCESS THE SNAPCHAT FAMILY SAFETY HUB

Created with guidance from Common Sense Media, Snapchat has developed a Family Safety Hub that explains how the app works and how to use its in-app protections for teens. It's recommended that you review this guidance before allowing a child to download Snapchat. Remember, the app is only intended for children aged 13 and over.

BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger connects with a child on Snapchat and makes them feel uncomfortable by pressuring them to send or receive unwanted or inappropriate images, the child can tap the three dots on that person's profile to report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user, with a tailored reporting section under the 'Nudity and Sexual Content' category. In this category, there's the option to report somebody for threatening to leak sexually explicit images, or 'nudes'.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you nurture an open dialogue. Talk about scams and blackmail before letting children sign up. If they're lured into a scam, encourage them to tell you immediately. Talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting, emphasising its inherent risks. Furthermore, explain how popular 'challenges' on the platform can have harmful consequences.

USE PRIVACY SETTINGS TOGETHER

Sit down with the children in your care and explore Snapchat's privacy settings as a shared activity. You can help them adjust who can contact them, view their stories, or see their location on Snap Map. It's a good opportunity to explain why some settings are safer than others, reinforcing their understanding of online boundaries. Encourage them to regularly review these settings, especially after app updates or changes in their friendship groups.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/snapchat>



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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

RECOGNISING & MANAGING STRESS

According to recent studies, over 60% of young people report feeling regularly overwhelmed – with stress impacting their learning, emotional wellbeing and social connections. If left unaddressed, stress can lead to more serious concerns such as anxiety, depression or disengagement. This guide offers ten practical, evidence-based strategies to help children and young people recognise, manage and recover from stress in healthy ways.

1 SPOT THE SUBTLE SIGNS



Look out for changes in mood, behaviour, or energy levels, such as irritability, withdrawal, clinginess, or frequent headaches. These may indicate that a child is feeling overwhelmed. By tuning into these cues early and offering a calm, non-judgemental space to talk, adults can help children feel heard and supported before issues escalate.

2 KEEP CONVERSATIONS FLOWING



Make time for open, informal check-ins – whether it's during car journeys, over dinner, or in quiet classroom moments. Let children know it's okay to talk about what's bothering them. Regular, low-pressure conversations create a safe space where emotions are validated, not dismissed.

3 MAKE MOVEMENT PART OF THE DAY



Physical activity can dramatically reduce stress hormones while improving mood and focus. Encourage movement through activities children genuinely enjoy – from team sports to dancing around the kitchen. Even light activity like stretching or walking the dog can help us all unwind.

4 SUPPORT HEALTHY SLEEP PATTERNS



Poor sleep makes stress harder to manage. Establish a calming evening routine that avoids screens before bedtime and promotes winding down, such as reading, listening to music, or chatting quietly. Good sleep hygiene helps reset mood, enhances concentration, and boosts emotional resilience.

5 PRACTISE MINDFULNESS



Mindfulness doesn't have to mean long periods of meditation. A few slow breaths before lessons or short family meditation sessions before bed can make a real difference. These simple habits help children ground themselves, reduce emotional reactivity, and build inner calm over time.

6 SET DIGITAL BOUNDARIES



Excessive screen time, especially before bed or on social media, is linked with higher stress levels. Set clear expectations for when and where devices can be used and suggest screen-free alternatives like crafts, nature walks, or board games to promote digital balance and reduce overstimulation.

7 NURTURE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



Strong relationships act as a buffer against stress. Whether it's a trusted adult, a sibling, or a good friend, ensure children have people around them they can talk to and spend quality time with. Help them build those bonds through shared activities and meaningful interaction.

8 PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION



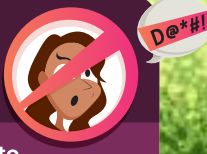
Set realistic goals and praise effort, not just outcomes. When children feel pressured to be perfect, stress naturally follows. Celebrate small wins and help them reframe setbacks as learning opportunities. This helps build confidence and reduces the fear of failure.

9 TEACH EVERYDAY PROBLEM-SOLVING



Use real-life scenarios to build resilience. Encourage children to identify problems, consider possible solutions, and choose a plan of action. Practising these steps builds a sense of control and reduces the helplessness that often accompanies stress.

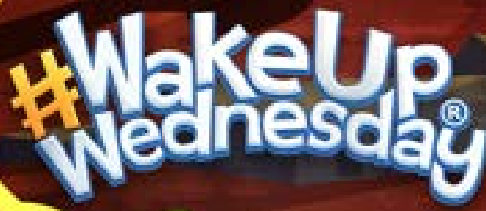
10 BE THE MODEL THEY NEED



Children notice how adults respond to challenges. Model healthy coping strategies such as taking breaks, asking for help, or calmly expressing frustration. By showing how you manage stress constructively, you help normalise these behaviours and encourage children to do the same.

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is Director of Halcyon Education Ltd, Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust, and lead expert for mental health at The National College. Anna specialises in strategic mental health solutions for schools, supporting educators and families to improve resilience, emotional literacy, and overall wellbeing for children across the UK.



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