

Safeguarding Bulletin June 2024

At last, the sun is making an appearance and hopefully this is the true start of summer. This is quite a bumper edition as there has been a lot in the news over the last few weeks, that I thought would be of interest or use to parents or carers. Hopefully they help you and your children navigate or understand some of the key issues facing children and their families today.



A study from the University of Michigan reviewed 135 different apps aimed at children and found that 100% of free apps and 88% of paid apps (many of which were labelled 'educational'), included pop-up advertisements. With some pop-ups being associated with deceptive marketing and potential scams, it can be concerning to see just how prevalent these online features are.

Despite the risks pop-up advertising poses to people online – especially children – there is plenty you can do to minimise the threat. This week's #WakeUpWednesday guide explains the safety concerns of pop-ups in detail and lets you know how to help children and young people enjoy their time online, without worrying about being taken in by such marketing.

All the #WakeUpWednesday guides are at the end of this bulletin

Investigation reveals child pedestrian casualties on England's roads

Daily Express

Dozens of child pedestrians are killed or injured on England's roads every week, according to an investigation by Personal Injury Claims UK. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of children (aged 0-15) who were killed or injured as pedestrians rose by 16% from 15,366 to 17,846, with an average daily number of 49 children killed or injured as pedestrians. Birmingham had the highest number of child fatalities and injuries out of any local authority area, followed by Leeds and Bradford. The London Borough of Hillingdon saw the biggest increase in figures with a 45% spike. Out of 304 local authority district areas in England, the majority (57%) recorded an increase in child fatalities and injuries caused by road vehicles. Nicholas Lyes, director of policy and standards at road safety charity IAM RoadSmart said: "It is a stark reminder to all parties that an updated road safety plan as well as a national roads renewal programme must be a priority for whomever forms the next Government."

Parents concerned about children's limited knowledge beyond social media

Daily Mirror

A recent study of 2,000 parents revealed that 44% worry their children's knowledge is limited to scrolling through social media. The majority of parents believe that digital skills should be given the same importance as reading and writing in schools. Two-thirds of parents see early learning as crucial for building a robust digital skillset, with 61% thinking it will boost their children's future career prospects. Meanwhile, 45% of parents think coding and programming should be included in the school curriculum. Sian Laffin, from Three, stated that "digital literacy opens up a world of opportunities for children." However, 74% expressed concern that children without access to the latest technology could be left behind in the future job market. Additionally, 67% of parents would like a stronger understanding of online protection.

Father of Molly Russell calls for windfall tax on tech companies

The Times

Ian Russell, the father of Molly Russell, who tragically took her own life at 14 after viewing disturbing online content, has called for a windfall tax on technology companies as a form of "pollution" payment. Russell has published a manifesto through his charity, the Molly Rose Foundation, which includes a five-point plan for online safety. He argues against banning under-16s from smartphones and social media, stating that it would penalise children for the failures of Big Tech. Instead, he proposes strengthening the Online Safety Act, placing a duty of candour on tech companies, and is urging Apple and Google to take stronger action through their app stores.

Gender clinics seek legal advice over ban on puberty blockers

The Times

Private gender clinics are seeking legal advice following the Government's ban on new prescriptions of puberty blockers for transgender children. Doctors could face being struck off if they prescribe these drugs to children. The Department of Health has closed a loophole that allowed under-18s to obtain the drugs through private clinics. The ban will be in effect until September 3 and applies to all new prescriptions of hormone-suppressing drugs for children in the UK. The ban, initially an "emergency" measure, is expected to be extended. Dr Aidan Kelly, director at Gender Plus, criticised the Government's decision as an act of discrimination. Gender Plus and other private gender clinics are exploring ways to support transgender individuals and hold the Government accountable.

What is Undress AI?

It's a sad world where some individuals develop tech to make money yet give no thought to what this tech can be used for. Enter undress AI, which is exactly what it says - upload an image of a clothed person, let the AI undress them. It isn't a specific app, there are many freely available apps and websites which allow the removal of clothing. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand what these tools are being used for. You can find out more [HERE](#).

Next Government must tackle 'persistent' education inequality

Daily Mail

A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies and funded by the Nuffield Foundation has warned that the next Government will face a number of challenges around education, including "persistent" levels of inequality, high rates of pupil absence, and growing challenges around mental health. While literacy and numeracy skills have "improved significantly" among 15-year-olds in England relative to other wealthy countries, the report says, "inequalities in education have been exceptionally persistent" despite "decades of policy attention". Last year, 43% of 16-year-olds eligible for free school meals achieved grade 4 or higher in maths and English, compared to 72% of pupils from better-off families, while 37% of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are now "persistently absent" missing at least one day of school every two weeks.

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UK schools struggle with social issues amidst teaching challenges

BBC News

Schools in the UK are facing unprecedented challenges as they grapple with social issues alongside teaching. The BBC looks at how schools in Telford are responding to the challenge. At Lantern Academy, a primary school, several students struggle with basic communication, with staff therefore having to teach them Makaton, a basic form of sign language. Additionally, some children are not toilet-trained, and schools have had to develop care plans for them. The forced closure of schools during the pandemic is said to have led to a decline in the value of education for some families. Parents' mental health has also been strained, and support services have closed down. Attendance rates have dropped, and many students are presenting with ADHD or autism. The challenges faced by these schools are complex and require additional support to ensure students can access education and become productive members of society.

Rise in arrests of teenagers for drug dealing

Mirror.co.uk

New research has found that last year an estimated 36 children aged 16 or younger were arrested each week for suspected drug dealing. A survey of police forces found that 1,439 under 17s were arrested for drug dealing or possession of large quantities of illegal drugs. Many of these children are being exploited by criminal gangs to expand drug empires. London saw the highest number of arrests, with 150 children suspected of dealing drugs. Lynn Perry, CEO of Barnardo's, warned that there is a lack of shared understanding about how children are exploited and called on the government to introduce a legal definition of child criminal exploitation.

Secondary schools in Southwark ban smartphones

The Times The Guardian

A group of secondary schools in Southwark have decided to ban smartphones in order to improve pupils' learning and wellbeing. The ban, which has been implemented by 17 state secondaries, aims to address the negative impact of smartphone use on children's mental health, sleep, attention spans, and exposure to inappropriate content. Under the policy, any phone used by a pupil during the school day will be confiscated, with smartphones potentially being kept for up to a week. The ban will affect over 13,000 pupils in Southwark. The schools are also working towards establishing a borough-wide approach. According to Jessica West, head of Ark Walworth academy, the ban is necessary as phone companies have failed to provide adequate protection for children.

Gender dysphoria cases among children skyrocket

Daily Mail

Twice as many children and teenagers are being diagnosed with gender dysphoria today than before the pandemic, according to a report by LexisNexis. The report found that insurance claims for gender identity care among under-18s increased by 133% from 2019 to 2023. The rise in gender dysphoria cases is part of a wider increase in mental health issues among children, with claims for eating disorders surging by 108% and anxiety-related claims rising by 61%. Experts attribute the rise in gender dysphoria cases to greater acceptance and willingness to seek treatment, but there are concerns that children's impressionable minds are being influenced by social trends. The report suggests that the Covid pandemic, with its lockdowns and increased online social interaction, may have contributed to introspection or doubt about gender identity.

Y6 Transition to Secondary School

As children make that move into secondary school it's likely that many will experience many 'digital firsts'. Internet Matters have a lovely, useful guide for parents about children moving to secondary school with advice such as:

What are children doing online.

- Are they ready for a smartphone (if they haven't already got one!).
- Activities children and parents can do together.
- and more

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

Labour vows to stop energy drink sales to under-16s

[Mirror.co.uk](https://www.mirror.co.uk)

Sir Keir Starmer has announced plans to ban the sale of highly caffeinated energy drinks to children under the age of 16 if Labour wins the general election. The move comes in response to concerns about the impact of these drinks on children's health and concentration in classrooms. Dentists have warned about the role energy drinks play in tooth decay, while teachers have raised concerns about their effect on pupil behaviour and learning. Under Labour's plan, energy drinks containing over 150mg of caffeine per litre will be banned, and retailers will face fines of up to £2,500 for non-compliance. The ban will be enforced by trading standards, and shops will be required to check customers' ID if they appear to be underage. The sale of energy drinks to children has already been prohibited by most supermarkets, but they can still be easily purchased from corner shops.

Schools and health services struggle under weight of poverty

[The Guardian The I](https://www.theguardian.com)

New research has suggested that Britain's schools and primary health services are struggling to cope with the demand caused by extreme poverty. The study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) revealed that staff routinely help parents with housing, visa, and benefits problems, as well as providing them with food, clothes, and other necessities. The study found that around 40% of people who work in primary schools and GP surgeries have considered quitting their job because of a "shameful" level of hardship among service users. Katie Schmuecker, JRF's principal policy adviser, said: "No plan for our schools or NHS should be taken seriously if it doesn't include tackling hardship. Primary schools and GP services are staggering under the weight of hardship - it shouldn't fall to them to ensure families are not going hungry."

TikTok and Disinformation

Here in England election time is upon us and, surprise surprise, the amount of misinformation and disinformation on social platforms is ramping up, particularly on TikTok, with dubious claims, misleading information, divisive content and outright lies.

Whilst school-aged children are not (yet) old enough to vote, it's an ideal time to talk with them about misinformation and disinformation as there are going to be plenty of real examples around.

There's a good BBC article about this political disinformation [HERE](#) which was published last week and I have listed a few resources below that you could use:

- BBC Bitesize [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- For parents - [HERE](#).



According to Statista, 69% of children currently engage in competitive sport, either in or out of school 🏈🏀 Thanks to the Euros, it's very possible that percentage will see an uptick in the coming weeks. Enjoying sport and revelling in healthy competition can have a fantastic impact on children's development – but when presented with the idea of winning side 🏆 emotions can sometimes run high, and feelings can be hurt ❤️

A healthy approach to any kind of game or contest – not just the sporting variety – is an important quality to teach to children and young people; and our [#WakeUpWednesday](#) guide can help you to do that. Our list of expert tips explains how to emphasise the value of playing fair and dealing with both victory and defeat in a reasonable, mature manner.

Increase in children on support plans for special educational needs

Daily Telegraph The Guardian London Evening Standard

The number of children and young people on support plans for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England has increased by 11.4% in a year, with an additional 58,914 education, health, and care (EHC) plans in place. However, nearly half of these plans are not being issued within the 20-week time limit. The Department for Education reported that the rise in EHC plans is higher than previous years, but the delay in issuing them is concerning. The figures also show that only just over half of new EHC plans were issued within the time limit. The increasing number of EHCPs reflects the rising demand for support for children and young people with complex needs.

Councils braced for £1bn shortfall in special education needs budgets

BBC News

Councils in England expect to face a shortfall of almost £1bn in special needs budgets this year. Of the 153 councils contacted by the BBC, 113 responded to a request for their financial forecasts for this year. Since 2019, the accumulated deficit in England for Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) has reached £3.2bn, according to the County Council Network. Overall, the picture is of rising demand, and at the same time growing pressure on council budgets. Official statistics published this month show almost 600,000 children and young people now have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in England, meaning councils have a legal duty to meet the child or young person's needs. Last year saw a 26% year-on-year increase in the number of new plans issued across England.

New campaign warns children about dangers of sharing explicit images

BBC News

A new campaign has been established by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to caution children about the dangers of sharing sexually explicit images and videos. The campaign, called Think Before You Share, aims to foster frank discussions between young people, parents, and teachers about the issue. The IWF collaborated with researchers at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) to gather insights from young people about their experiences in the digital age. The campaign is backed by research from the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute (IPPPRI) at ARU. The research found that the sharing and soliciting of nudes has become normalised among young people, with some engaging in a "football card collection culture" of nudes of their female peers. The IWF also offers a service called Report Remove to help young people stop the sharing of their imagery online and take action against threats of sexual extortion.

Bold attempt to break students' phone addictions

The Guardian

The *Guardian* looks at an experiment launched by All Saints Catholic College in London, which two months ago switched to a radical 12-hour school day to tackle students' phone addictions. The school offers activities, meals, and a phone-free environment from 7am to 7pm for students in years 7 and 8, with head Andrew O'Neill saying that with children facing media pressure to "become adults way before they're ready", he wanted to "create an environment where you just allow them to remain being children". While the school will carry out a full evaluation, early signs are encouraging, with a 16% rise in pupils getting merit stars and a 12% fall in detentions for pupils not completing homework - rising to 60% for the children who previously had the worst homework records.

Salford teens take on digital detox challenge

BBC News

As part of a BBC project, 10 Salford students at Media City's University Technical College agreed to trade in their smartphones for basic Nokia handsets. The five-day digital detox challenged the students' smartphone habits, affecting almost every aspect of their lives. While some found it difficult and dropped out, others discovered the benefits of being phone-free. The experiment revealed that 23% of young people agree that smartphones should be banned for under-16s, and 50% feel anxious without their smartphones. After the detox, most students expressed a desire to limit their screen time and engage in other activities.

Two thirds of council-run youth centres have closed

Financial Times Daily Mirror

Research by the Unison trade union has found that more than two thirds of council-run youth centres in England and Wales have closed since 2010 - with 1,243 facilities closed and just 481 still in operation by the end of March 2023. By the end of the year, fewer than half of councils still operated their own youth centres, the union said, arguing closures are leaving vulnerable young people at greater risk from issues ranging from drug and knife crime to mental health challenges. Unison's head of local government, Mike Short, said years of council funding cuts "have hit hard and left vulnerable youngsters high and dry", while a "decade and more of austerity has undone much of the previous good work and created a lost generation of youngsters".

Roblox - Understanding Generative AI

So far, from my experience, students young and old have a very limited understanding of what AI actually is. Using the tools is one thing, understanding what they are and how they work is another thing entirely.

Roblox have put together an 8-page guide called 'Understanding Generative AI' which is a really nice, simple guide for tweens and teens and may be worth sharing with them. You can find the guide [HERE](#).

For Parents - WhatsApp Safety Guide

Given that WhatsApp is one of the most popular messaging apps in the world it's no surprise I find children from Year 3 upwards using it with very little understanding of what safety features are available. Internet Matters has a great guide for parents about privacy settings, where to get support and more.

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

Campaign - Think Before you Share

There are increased warnings that the soliciting and sharing of nude imagery has become normalised among young people and as such the Internet Watch Foundation has launched a new campaign called Think Before you Share which aims to help young people understand the harm of sharing such images of themselves and others.

On [THIS](#) page there is information for teenagers, parents and carers

Number of child drownings doubles in three years

Sunday Express

The number of children drowning has doubled in three years, with experts attributing the trend to a rise in the popularity of water sports and a decrease in swimming lessons. Last year, 41 children died by drowning, twice the number from 2019 to 2020. Research shows that over two million youngsters missed out on swimming sessions during the pandemic, resulting in a quarter of a million children unable to swim the length of a 25m pool. Additionally, a shortage of swimming teachers has left 660,000 children without swimming lessons. The Royal Life Saving Society UK has urged everyone to learn the Water Safety Code to prevent drownings.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

POP-UP ADS

Pop-up advertisements have been a staple of the internet since they were first introduced in the late 1990s. This form of advertising causes a small window or banner to appear in the foreground while someone is browsing a website. Although these adverts are merely irritating for most people, pop-ups can present more severe risks to younger users.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

DECEPTIVE TACTICS

Children sometimes don't understand that adverts (including pop-ups) are designed to sell a product – and can't distinguish between a legitimate feature of a site and an advertisement. Video games, for example, can be full of pop-up ads that tempt users into spending money, yet they might take the form of a mini-game or extra level.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While some adverts are targeted based on a user's interests and activity online, that isn't always the case. This means that children may unfortunately be exposed to ads for age-inappropriate goods or services such as tobacco products, alcohol and gambling sites.

MALWARE RISK

Most pop-ups from reputable advertisers are safe. However, in some cases, pop-ups can trick you into downloading malware – whereby cybercriminals install software on your device, allowing them to access your sensitive data. It can be difficult to know if malware has been installed on your device, so your best option is to avoid engaging with these pop-ups altogether. Be wary of sites that suddenly bombard you with ads or try to prevent you from leaving.

PRIVACY RISK

Many app and game developers will collect their users' personal data, such as their name, address, email address, geolocation information, unique numerical identifiers, photos and payment information. If a child clicks on an illegitimate pop-up laced with malware, all this information could be put at risk.

RACKING UP BILLS

If a child has access to a payment card on their device – be it a smartphone, laptop, or tablet – they could very quickly rack up a massive bill by interacting with pop-up adverts and buying products shown to them. Try to keep a close eye on their spending.

BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT

Research has found that pop-up ads can even have an impact on children's behaviour. Some of these adverts use manipulative tactics that take advantage of children's developmental vulnerabilities, intentionally or otherwise. This approach may cause a child's mood to shift: becoming more stubborn, for example, if they begin wanting their parents to buy a specific product for them.

Advice for Parents & Educators

START A CONVERSATION

It's important to have regular conversations with children about online advertising so that they understand the risks of interacting with pop-ups. For example, if a child asks for a product which has been advertised to them online, ask them why they want it and how they found it: this will present an opportunity to talk youngsters through the tactics used in online marketing.

SPOT THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that a child may be following pop-up ads to make online purchases or viewing content that could be harmful, it's important to be able to spot the signs. Due to the often-manipulative nature of these adverts, children who interact with them regularly may show signs of distraction, stubbornness and an increasingly materialistic worldview.

MONITOR CONTENT

It can often be difficult to spot when a pop-up advert is malicious – even more so for impressionable younger users. It's important to monitor the content they're consuming to prevent them from clicking on something dangerous. If a pop-up ad seems too good to be true – promising a free iPad, for example – it probably is.

PRIVACY SETTINGS

Most modern devices have privacy settings that let you limit the amount of advertising a child is subjected to while using apps or browsing the internet. You may also want to speak to teachers about avoiding sites and apps with advertising, as well as adjusting digital privacy settings on any education technology they use.

LIMIT SPENDING

Try to stay aware of what children are spending and ensure that payment details aren't linked to or saved on the gaming platform that they use. Most video games and internet-enabled devices have settings that can help you manage what children can or cannot purchase online.

CUT DOWN ON SCREEN TIME

Given the prevalence of pop-up ads (which can appear on everything from smartphones and tablets to internet-connected toys and games), it might be beneficial to limit the time children spend on digital devices to curb their exposure to digital advertising.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology writer with more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, she is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant who writes for *Forbes*, *TechRadar* and *Wired*, among others.



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

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

FAIR PLAY AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION

In school sports, fair play and friendly competition are important for character development. Fair play embodies respect and integrity while good-natured competition balances rivalry with camaraderie. This guide addresses potential challenges – like the pressure to win – and offers practical tips on instilling values of fair play and cultivating a positive sporting environment for young athletes.

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Parents, carers and teachers should try to exemplify fair play: demonstrating respect for opponents, coaches and officials. Children frequently learn by observing adult behaviour, so displaying a sense of fair play sets a powerful precedent for them to follow in their own actions on and off the field.

2 EFFORT OVER OUTCOME

Encourage children to focus on giving it their all, rather than basing their entire performance on whether they win or not. This fosters a growth mindset, where the journey and the process of improvement are valued just as much as the end result. It also reduces the pressure to “win at all costs”, which can be a harmful outlook in some situations.

3 SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Establish clear guidelines and expectations for behaviour before, during and after sporting events. Ensuring that children understand what is considered acceptable conduct helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes a positive, respectful atmosphere.

4 HIGHLIGHT COOPERATION

Underline the value of teamwork and cooperation in achieving success. Success isn't just about individual achievements, but about how well the team communicates, encourages each other and works together towards a common goal. A strong focus on cooperation fosters camaraderie and mutual support among players.

5 DISCUSS ACCEPTING DEFEAT

Help children to understand that they can't win every contest – that losing occasionally is a natural part of both sport and life in general. Teaching them to accept defeat gracefully and learn from their mistakes promotes resilience, humility and the ability to bounce back stronger from setbacks. Taking a loss in one's stride is also an admirable trait and can help children and young people garner respect in their future life.

6 ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Promote an environment where all children feel welcome and valued, regardless of their skill level. Prioritise the importance of participation and enjoyment over winning, creating a supportive atmosphere where every child can thrive and develop their abilities without unnecessary pressure.

7 FOSTER CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Teach children how to resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully, both on and off the field. Providing them with strategies for effective communication and problem-solving helps build stronger relationships and enhances their ability to navigate challenges, which can be a huge boon to them throughout their adult lives.

8 TEACH RESPECT

Emphasise to children the importance of respecting everyone involved in the game, regardless of the outcome. Respect for your teammates, opponents, coaches and officials helps to create a positive, inclusive sports environment where everyone can feel valued and appreciated.

9 GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Offer feedback that focuses on areas for improvement rather than unfiltered criticism. Praise what a child has done well and advise on how to improve, rather than simply pointing out shortcomings. Encouraging a growth mindset and highlighting progress helps children to develop confidence, resilience and a desire to continue striving for excellence.

10 CELEBRATE GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

Try to avoid solely drawing attention to children's physical performance on the field. Recognise and celebrate acts of sportsmanship, fair play and kindness, too. By spotlighting positive behaviour, you reinforce the importance of such conduct and inspire children to practise this in the future, creating a culture of respect and camaraderie within the sports community that does wonders for morale.

Meet Our Expert

Caroline Holder is a PE consultant based in Staffordshire. Having worked across all age ranges delivering PE in schools, she now trains teachers and works with schools to develop their provision and ensure it achieves maximum impact for pupils. She passionately believes in the impact that PE, sport, and activity can have on children.



The National College