# The Gilberd School Safeguarding bulletin

Welcome back to the autumn term, where the sunny weather seems a bit of a distant memory and the term is already in full swing. I hope you all had a restful summer break, nonetheless. This is a round up of useful information, links and current safeguarding and well-being articles and guides, which I hope you will find useful.

All attachments will be sent with this bulletin.



Recently I read an interesting article from Connect Futures titled 'Empowering Young People: Riots, Algorithmic Extremism, Protest and Truth'. It was the 'algorithmic' part of the title which caught my attention because, as we're all aware, algorithmic feeds are becoming much more common on many of the platforms we use. This isn't anything new, we've been talking to students about algorithms, misinformation, fake news etc. for years, but what really interested me was a section called 'Beyond the Facts'. This is where, faced with the real facts, many people would still rather believe the false information because it is something they're emotionally attached to, it resonates with them.

It's a short but very interesting article and well worth a read HERE.

## Video Games and Children

**Unicef have shared an article with some nice, clear and simple advice for parents/carers about online gaming. The article covers how to create a positive and safe gaming environment, how parents can engage with their children, what the benefits or gaming are and more.**

**You can view the article on the Unicef website HERE.**

## YouTube - Parental Controls for Teens

Google (YouTube) have, in the past, always argued that YouTube is strictly for over 13's, much like most other social platforms. This age is predominantly for marketing/advertising purposes. However, that argument has never stood up given that Google have never had a means to prevent under 13's using the platform wither with or without an account.

Back in 2021 YouTube introduced new parental features, called Supervised Experience, and this was for parents of children under 13 who were using YouTube.

Now, it looks like YouTube is extending Supervised Experience for parents of teenagers. In early September they announced that parents/carers will be able to link their teenagers account to the parent account where parents will have the ability to see some limited information such as number of video uploads, comments etc.

I think some parents may be disappointed that this is quite a limited set of features and I would agree. You can read more about this HERE.

## Cottrell-Boyce slams smartphone dependency in schools

*The Times*

Frank Cottrell-Boyce, the children's laureate, has condemned schools for their reliance on smartphones, lamenting that they have become essential for education. He expressed his frustration at the Labour Party conference, saying: "How did it ever get to this? Taking a smartphone to school. That is like taking a circus to school with you." Cottrell-Boyce revealed that he had to buy smartphones for his children to facilitate their schooling, highlighting the alarming dependency on technology. He noted that even leaders in the tech industry restrict their own children's access to smartphones, explaining: "Google's leaders' kids don't get phones. They know [the damage]." While some schools have banned smartphones, others have urged parents to delay purchasing them until their children are 14. Cottrell-Boyce emphasised the need for parental responsibility, stating: "We could look at what we do to our children and how we behave around them, 100%."

## Children losing sleep over worries

*Daily Mirror*

A recent study involving 1,000 children aged six to 16 revealed that one in five are averaging less than eight hours of sleep per night, with 69% expressing concerns about school. The study, which PGL Beyond commissioned, showed that half of the kids have worries that keep them up at night, including anxiety about their homework, exams, and social pressures. Anthony Jones, CEO of PGL Beyond, noted: "Children are losing precious hours of sleep due to mounting worries, and the effects are often showing up in the classroom." The study also revealed that while 76% of kids feel their teachers support them, many of them are afraid to talk to their friends about their worries.

## Health bodies call for expansion of free school meals

*Daily Mirror* *The Times*

Health organisations including the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the British Dental Association, the Royal Society for Public Health, and Diabetes UK have published an open letter to Health Secretary Wes Streeting calling for the expansion of free school meals in England to address the "devastating impact of poor diet and food scarcity on the health of our children and young people". The organisations warn that fewer than 2% of packed lunches meet the same nutritional standards as school meals, with high rates of tooth decay, obesity and mental health issues linked to poor nutrition, and are are advocating for "the rollout of nutritious free school meals for all children attending state-funded primary schools in England".

## Parents urged to discuss mental health with their children

*Express.co.uk*

The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) suicide prevention charity is launching a new online kit as part of its efforts to encourage families to talk about mental health and suicide - saying that despite suicide being the leading cause of death amongst young people, just a fifth of parents and carers of 16- to 23-year-olds have discussed the topic with then in the last year. Chief executive Simon Gunning said while people "worry mentioning the 'S' word puts the thought in their loved ones' minds", the charity knows "from our extensive work in the area that the opposite is true. Talking about suicide with young people in the right way and simply saying that word, whether they're doing fine or whether they're at crisis point, is proven to be a powerful suicide prevention tool."

## Vaping 'can damage lung capacity as much as smoking'

*The Guardian*

Research carried out by academics at Manchester Metropolitan University has found that vaping can damage young people's lungs as much as smoking - with co-author Dr Azmy Faisal saying the findings add to "growing evidence that long-term use of vaping is harmful and challenges the idea that vaping could be a healthier alternative to smoking". The *Guardian* notes that between 2014 and 2023, the proportion of 11- to 17-year-olds using vapes has risen sharply, from 1.3% to 7.6%, with the proportion of adults using vapes rising from 4.2% to 11% over the same period.

## Parents warned of 'serious harm' caused by truancy

*Evening Standard* *The Sunday Times*

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson writes in the *Sunday Times* ahead of the start of the school year, urging parents to do all they can to ensure their children stay in class. There are, she said, "many parents out there doing everything they can to support children back into the classroom", including those "managing poor mental health and wellbeing, special educational needs or chronic illnesses that may make it hard for children to be in school". "By contrast", she writes, "reasons for not being in school do not include cheaper holidays, birthday treats or even a runny nose. Nor do they include unpopular subjects or just not fancying it today. Too many parents think they do." Lost learning "does serious harm", she points out, with those who attend regularly "twice as likely to achieve good GCSEs in English and maths compared with those who are persistently absent", with evidence of knock-on effects on future earnings, while absences also disrupt the school environment for teachers and other pupils.

## Pupils 'more engaged' following mobile phone ban

*The Press and Journal*

Claire McGonigal, the head teacher of Grantown Grammar School in Grantown-on-Spey in the Scottish Highlands, has said that introducing a total ban on mobile phones in May has seen engagement in class improve, while pupils "are more engaged with their peers" and are "taking part in more extra-curricular lunchtime clubs, are playing more informal sports at lunchtime, and also playing more board games and cards at break and lunchtime". Pupils are required to turn their phones off and keep them out of sight in their bags while on school grounds, and Ms McGonigal said the school has "had very few mobile phones confiscated, and a number of pupils have voluntarily fed back to staff that they are enjoying not having the pressure of having to monitor their phones during the day".

## Four in ten parents use tech to track children

*Daily Mirror* *Express.co.uk*

A survey of parents commissioned by family location-based services firm Life360 has found that 40% of parents of children aged 11-17 use technology like location-sharing apps to keep track of children who often ignore calls or texts, or fail to update their parents about their whereabouts. Podcaster and TV personality Luisa Zissman, who is working with the firm, says back-to-school season, which is already "super stressful", can "be made even more difficult when my daughter is off doing her own thing and doesn't answer calls or texts, or let me know what her plans are after school".

## Essex school to enforce mobile phone ban with scanners

*BBC News*

The *BBC* reports that Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form in Essex is preparing to introduce new hand-held scanners to enforce a ban on mobile phones. Under the school's rules, pupils below sixth form are expected to hand in their phone at the start of the day for storage in a lockable unit, with sixth form pupils permitted to use their phones in the school building, although not in social areas. Safeguarding and child protection consultant Ann Marie Christian says the use of such scanners is growing, noting that if parents feel their use is "unfair", they should "complain and have a conversation with leadership".

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
# INSTAGRAM

**follow**

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

Instagram is a highly popular social media platform with over 2 billion active monthly users. The app is continuously updating and adding new features to meet the wishes of its audience, allowing them to upload images and videos to their Instagram feed, create interactive 'stories', go live, exchange private messages or explore and follow other accounts that catch their eye.

**AGE RESTRICTION 13+**

## ADDICTION

Many social media platforms, Instagram included, are designed to keep us engaged on them for as long as possible. They encourage scrolling often and scrolling more in case we miss something important – in essence, a fear of missing out. On Instagram, young people can lose track of time when aimlessly scrolling and watching videos posted by friends, acquaintances, influencers and possibly strangers.

## UNREALISTIC IDEALS

Children sometimes compare themselves to what they see online: how they look, how they dress, and the way their life is going in comparison to others on social media. However, most people only share the positives about their lives online and many use filters when sharing pictures of themselves. A constant comparison with unrealistic ideals can lead to insecurity over one's own appearance and lifestyle.

## GOING LIVE

Livestreaming on Instagram allows users to connect with friends and followers in real time. Risks increase if the account is public, because that means anyone can watch the broadcast, which could result in further contact from strangers. Additional dangers of going live include an impulse to act inappropriately to draw more viewers, as well as being exposed to harmful content or offensive language.

## INFLUENCER CULTURE

Social media influencers are sometimes paid thousands of pounds to promote products, services, apps and more. When celebrities or influencers post such content, it often says 'paid partnership' above the post. In April 2024, Ofcom found that over a quarter of children (27%) believed in influencer marketing, accepting their endorsement of products wholeheartedly. So it's perfectly possible for young people to be taken in by this kind of content.

## PRODUCT TAGGING

Product tags allow users to tag a product or business in their post. This tag will take viewers directly to the product detail page on the shop where the item can be purchased. Children may also be encouraged by influencers to purchase products that they advertise.

## EXCLUSION & OSTRACISM

Youngsters are highly sensitive to feeling excluded, which comes in many forms: not receiving as many 'likes' as expected; not being tagged in a friend's photo; being unfriended; not receiving a comment on their post or a reply to a message they sent. Being excluded online hurts just as much as offline. Young people have reported lower moods and self-esteem when excluded in this way, feeling as if they don't belong and aren't valued.

# Advice for Parents & Educators

## AVOID GOING PUBLIC

If a young user wants to share their clothing style, make up or similar and use product tagging to show off the items in their post, they may be tempted to change their settings to public. This leaves their profile visible to everyone, which carries the risk of strangers getting in touch with them. Set a child's account to private and explain the importance of keeping it this way.

## HAVE AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Talk to children about the positives and negatives of social media, including the risks involved and how they can view or create content safely with family and friends. Explain how safety settings will ensure only followers can view them, and why this is so important. Also, if you find a child continuously uses filters on their photos, ask them why and impress on them that they don't need it.

## MANAGE LIKE COUNTS

Due to the potential impact on mental wellbeing, Instagram allows users to hide the total likes on their posts, to prevent people from obsessing over that number in the corner. Users can hide like counts on all the posts in their feed as well as on their own posts. This means others can't see how many likes a person gets. This can be done by going into Settings > Notifications > Posts > Likes > Off.

## USE MODERATORS

Instagram Live has implemented a mechanic called 'Moderators', meaning that creators can assign a moderator and give them the power to report comments, remove viewers and remove the ability for certain viewers to comment at all. Consider this if a child in your care wants to go live on the platform. It's also recommended to keep devices in communal spaces so you're aware if a child does go live or watch a livestream.

## FOLLOW INFLUENCERS

Following influencers will allow you to monitor what they're sharing as well as being able to discuss anything which you deem inappropriate. Talk to children about who they follow and help them to develop critical thinking skills about what the influencer is trying to do. For example, encourage the child to ask themselves if an influencer is trying to sell them a product when they make a video endorsing it.

## BALANCE YOUR TIME

Instagram has a built-in activity dashboard that lets you control how much time is spent on the app. Make sure children sign in to the platform with the correct age, as Instagram's 'Teen Accounts' afford much more control for parents and carers over how long they can use the app each day. Talk with young users about how much time they spend on Instagram and work together to set a healthy time limit.

## Meet Our Expert

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

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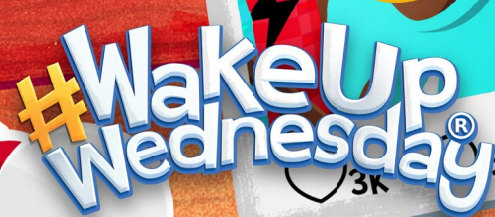
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# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
# FINAL FANTASY XIV

**AGE RESTRICTION PEGI 16**

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

The video game Final Fantasy XIV launched in 2010, and, despite being critically panned, it saw an overhaul that has made it one of the biggest success stories in gaming. Its huge world, epic story and versatile combat system have continued to draw in new players, but there's a lot that trusted adults need to be aware of – not least the cost of paying monthly to play.

## ALWAYS ONLINE

Final Fantasy XIV is an MMORPG, which stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game. Much like World of Warcraft, players create a character in a chosen class and level up by completing quests to gain power and items. The game requires a constant internet connection, whether you're playing on PC, Mac, PlayStation or Xbox, and there's no option to play offline.

## REGULAR EXPANSIONS

As with similar titles in the genre, players can purchase expansions to unlock additional content for the game. Those without the expansions will be locked out of certain new quests and activities, meaning that young people who play regularly will potentially have the next release earmarked on their calendar, ready to buy it as soon as possible.

## IN-GAME PURCHASES & SUBSCRIPTION FEE

Users need to pay £8.99 per month to play Final Fantasy XIV, but there is a free trial. If someone stops paying, they'll lose access to their character (although they'll be able to pick up the payments again and resume where they left off). If a player forgets to cancel their payments, however, those subscription fees will continue rolling on automatically.

## VOICE & TEXT CHAT

Final Fantasy XIV lets players send chat messages in-game or speak to each other over voice chat. On the one hand, that provides plenty of choice for how those enjoying the game can interact with their fellow fans. On the other hand, however, it's easier than in many games to receive unprompted messages from a stranger, with whom you constantly share your play space.

## VIOLENCE

While Final Fantasy XIV has a fairly light tone throughout some of its quests, many involve killing enemies and sometimes even wild animals. The violence isn't especially strong – more comparable to a cartoon or anime style – but the act alone may make some children feel uncomfortable, if they're not yet able to separate fictional harm from the real kind.

## POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION

As with World of Warcraft, there's an element of addiction to Final Fantasy XIV. The gameplay loop can be quite engrossing, as minutes turn into hours and hours into days while playing alone or with friends. This can potentially lead to missing real-life events, a lack of interest in any activities not related to the game and procrastination around responsibilities like schoolwork.

# Advice for Parents & Educators

## MANAGE PLAYTIME

Playtime limits are a great way to counter the addictive qualities of games like Final Fantasy XIV. They allow you discuss why it's still important to enjoy things outside of gaming while still letting a child enjoy playing online with their friends when it makes sense to do so. It's all well and good to have fun with a game, so long as they're able to step away and reconnect with the real world.

## PLAY TOGETHER

The free trial makes it extremely easy to jump into Final Fantasy XIV and play alongside a child, provided they're old enough. Not only does that help you ensure that settings are adjusted for their privacy and safety, but it may also end up becoming a bonding experience for you both and any other family members that want to try it out.

## MAKE USE OF THE FREE TRIAL

The Final Fantasy XIV free trial is a generous one, with no limits on how long someone can play until their character hits level 70. That's easily dozens of hours for a child to go through the game, complete quests, and see if they enjoy it before purchasing expansions or subscribing to a membership. They may well move on to something else before you need to spend so much as a penny.

## REMEMBER, IT'S A PEGI 16

Despite its often-relaxing nature, Final Fantasy XIV carries a PEGI 16 rating for violence and drugs (although the latter is due to a character smoking a pipe on occasion). There's minimal blood, but characters can attack enemies (and other players) with weapons and spells. Take a look at some gameplay videos to see if the content is appropriate for a younger player.
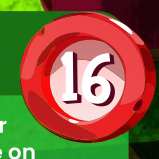
## Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Editor-in-Chief of GGRecon, and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for five years. A longtime fan of online games, he's also a parent, and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his work has previously been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar and plenty more.

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# 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators
# CREATING FAMILY RULES FOR USING DEVICES

A set of family rules agreed on with children can promote the safe, responsible use of devices like tablets, smartphones, gaming consoles and computers. By developing rules around technology, it opens the conversation regarding boundaries and expectations, ensuring a healthy balance of screentime. This guide will help you to develop an age-appropriate family agreement to suit your household.

## 1 WORK TOGETHER

Collaborating with children when setting rules around the use of technology is a valuable task that can encourage them to take more ownership. It's important to make rules which reflect your family and are age appropriate. Think about what you all enjoy doing online and what apps, games or devices children use most frequently.

## 2 AGREE TIME LIMITS AND SUITABLE TIMES

Be realistic when setting screen time limits. These can vary depending on the child's age, whether it's a weekday or weekend, and what they're actually doing online. If they're conducting research for homework, that might require more time than if they were playing games. Consider when screen time begins: does it come after chores and homework? Agree times when technology and phones must be put away.

## 3 ENCOURAGE HONESTY

Family rules ensure that everyone can have fun with their devices and be safe while doing so. Nonetheless, children may make mistakes as they learn to navigate the online world. Emphasise that if they ever feel worried, unsafe or upset about something they've done, sent, said or received, they should tell you immediately so you can help them resolve the problem.

## 4 CHARGING AND OVERNIGHT STORAGE

To ensure children get the downtime they need overnight, it's important that devices – especially smartphones – are kept in a common space, where possible. This reduces the chance of pointless late-night scrolling or sleep being disturbed by calls, messages or notifications. There are charging boxes you can purchase, or all gadgets could be charged in the kitchen overnight to avoid distractions.

## 5 REVIEW RULES REGULARLY

Anything you agree on isn't set in stone. These rules will likely alter as children get older and the way they use technology changes. Take time to review these as a family; discuss what's working, and what isn't. Communication is key – so by doing this, you involve the child in their own online safety while promoting an open dialogue.

## 6 PROTECT PERSONAL INFO

Discuss and demonstrate the importance of protecting your personal information. Talk about what details you share online and who with. Use parental controls to block children from connecting with strangers, so that any information they do share is among their real friends. Ask a child's permission before posting any photos of them on social media, as this demonstrates positive online behaviour that they should learn and remember.

## 7 BE RESPECTFUL

Highlight the importance of showing respect to others when using technology. Encourage children to speak kindly to others online – such as on social media, when playing multiplayer games or in group chats (which can often lend themselves to teasing behaviour). Explain that if they aren't treating others considerately, they might be made to stay away from their devices for a while.

## 8 "NO TECH" ZONES

Designating spaces in the house where technology isn't allowed (for example: bedrooms, bathrooms and at the dinner table) lets you keep an eye on what children are viewing and who they're communicating with. It gives you some quality, screen-free time with them, too. It also helps reduce any impulses to potentially engage with inappropriate content, as they're unlikely to do so in a common space within the home.

## 9 AGREE ON CONSEQUENCES

BAD CHOICE · GOOD CHOICE

As a family, discuss why the rules are important: to balance their screentime, to ensure everyone enjoys gaming or interacting online, and that they are safe when doing so. Therefore, if these rules are broken, there has to be a consequence. Discuss what would be fair for certain breaches of the rules, as this can prevent a disproportionate response in the future.

## 10 KNOW ALL PASSWORDS

To protect children from inappropriate content, parents should have access to all passwords. Parents should also make it clear that they will check children's devices, should they have any concerns about their use. Emphasise that this isn't due to a lack of trust but is an extra way of keeping them safe.

## Meet Our Expert

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

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# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
# LEGO FORTNITE

Epic Games have recently introduced three new game modes to Fortnite: Rocket Racing, Fortnite Festival and, finally, Lego Fortnite: a survival game using official Lego characters. There are lots of great mechanics that encourage creativity in children, but – as with any online game – it's important to stay aware of the potential risks.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### MONETISATION

Lego Fortnite utilises a similar online item shop to the main Fortnite game. When this title was released, the makers introduced thousands of Lego versions of the original game's character skins. Owning an original Fortnite cosmetic means you also own the LEGO version at no extra cost, but the addition of these extra versions could potentially spark new interest in young players, making it more tempting to pay real money for these in-game accessories.

### ONLINE PLAY

LEGO Fortnite can be played online, as with the base game. While a player's LEGO world is private when it's first created, they can then invite anyone on their in-game friends list to play with them. If any strangers are on this friends list, they can be invited onto their server. Thankfully, Epic Games has implemented a solid reporting system, as well as tools to kick other players from the game.

### FEAR FACTOR

There is no explicit violence in Lego Fortnite, but there is a lot of combat. While the battles in Lego Fortnite remain very cartoonish and child friendly, a lot of the action unfolds inside dark caves, with spiders, skeletons or scary-looking monsters. The game can get a little spooky at times, which could potentially scare younger players.

### COMPLEX GAMEPLAY

Lego Fortnite is a survival game, though it's not as simple as something like Minecraft. There are lots of different crafting stations and loads of items to use or combine (including various rarities to seek out and harvest). The gathering and crafting elements of the game can get quite complicated and confusing, which could be a source of frustration for some younger players.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### LEGO IS FRIENDLY

Much like real Lego, this game is incredibly inviting. It's friendly, fun and accessible: a younger player could still enjoy this title even if they'd never played Fortnite before. With sanitised violence, it's a far more family-friendly gaming experience all round – worth bearing in mind if you're concerned about children and young people being exposed to violent or frightening content.

### SET LITTLE CHALLENGES

As we've noted, the game is a lot more difficult than it may seem, which could be frustrating or upsetting for some younger players. While the game does a good job of setting realistic targets for players, it can still feel overwhelming. If parents suggest smaller challenges – such as building a house – children can flex their creativity, express themselves with their builds and feel a real sense of accomplishment.
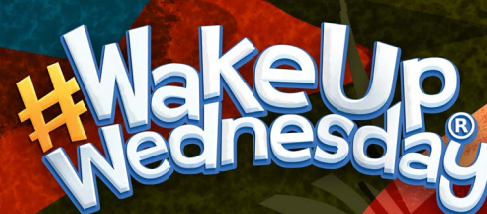
### PLAY TOGETHER

Take some time to play the game together. Not only will that help with some of the complicated tasks, but it's also just a fun pastime. Playing with family members also reduces the potential for younger players to invite strangers to enjoy the game with – if any are on their friends list. Furthermore, playing with children will let you more effectively limit their time spent on the game. Instead of "switch it off", you can now say "let's play some more later!"

### MONITOR SPENDING

If a child has provided their parents' email address and been given consent to make in-game purchases, it's worth keeping an eye on how much gets spent on the in-game currency, V-Bucks. It's very tempting to buy character skins in LEGO form, as a way of expressing yourself and looking cool and unique. As you may know already, the average skin costs between £6-18, which can add up very quickly if not tracked and limited. Keep in mind that you can make it necessary to enter a PIN code to validate every purchase using the game's parental controls, and you can prevent the game from saving your payment information whenever you make a purchase. Furthermore, players under-13 automatically have their spending limited to $100 (£78.55) per day.

## Meet Our Expert

Daniel Lipscombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality, augmented reality and Web3. He has also written 15 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.

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