



The Gilbert School



Safeguarding & Wellbeing Bulletin July 2024

I have attached a selection of resources that I hope you might find useful.

The Safeguarding team wish you and your families a happy and healthy summer – we will see you well-rested and hopefully refreshed after the summer break.



NHS statistics indicate that the need for mental health support for children and young people in the UK is higher than ever, with 1 in 6 children (16%) reported as being in need of such help. Unchecked worry and anxiety in under-18s is a key contributor to this figure, with roughly 4 in 10 children (37.4%) saying they don't receive regular support from their school or college.

While everyone feels a touch of concern over the future now and then, chronic worry and anxiety can feel unending. This can cause significant damage to young people's wellbeing – such as losing sleep, feeling emotionally drained, and having their school grades impacted. It's vital that children and young people suffering from worry and anxiety have effective tools to manage their fears and regain control, and know when to seek further help. This Wake Up Wednesday, we're offering expert guidance on how to provide that support.

'All Wake Up Wednesday' guides will be attached to this email



The sharing of nudes, semi-nudes and other explicit material is a prominent issue in today's digital landscape: both their distribution and their misuse. In fact, the National Crime Agency has issued an alert to hundreds of thousands of education professionals after a study found that 26,718 cases of "sextortion" had been reported in 2023 - more than doubling from the year before.

It's vital for parents and educators to be aware of how they can safeguard children from exposure to, or involvement in, sharing intimate images – especially given that the sharing of such material featuring under-18s is a serious criminal offence. This week's guide offers expert insight into the risks of sharing intimate images online, as well as tips on implementing measures to shield children from encountering inappropriate digital content of a sexual nature.

New law to create national register of 'ghost children' not in school

[The Sunday Times](#)

The Government will create a national register of children who are not going to school, to address high levels of absenteeism and prevent youngsters from becoming part of a lost COVID generation. A legal obligation will be placed on councils to maintain a record of all children who are not in school - so-called "ghost children" - and on parents to submit information on those who are homeschooled. The legislation will be outlined in Sir Keir Starmer's first King's Speech this week. Artificial intelligence will be used to improve co-ordination between schools, GPs and councils, while Ofsted will be granted access to school absence rates as part of annual safeguarding checks. The education bill, which is anticipated to be signed into law this year, will also include the provision of Breakfast clubs in all primary schools, which will be required by law to ensure that every child, regardless of circumstances, is ready to learn and well-prepared for the school day. This will sit alongside an existing commitment to provide access to a specialist mental health expert in each school.

Children receiving obesity treatment aged three

[BBC News](#)

Obesity treatment is being provided in Kent and Sussex at specialised clinics for children as young as three. Since its opening in 2022, 72 children have visited the Darent Valley Hospital's Complications from Excess Weight (CEW) clinic in Dartford. The clinical lead at the CEW, Dr. Alok Gupta, stated that the problem "won't go away" and that it is having an effect on "the emotional health and the quality of life of these children." It is the first specialised service of its sort for children in Kent, and doctors claim they are seeing illnesses often identified in adults at the 30-centre trial programme. The team, which consists of psychologists, dietitians, and paediatricians, primarily treats teenagers. Most, they claim, are receiving treatment for weight issues related to their lifestyle.

Starmer rejects calls to ban mobile phones for children under 16

[BBC News](#) [Daily Telegraph](#) [Mirror.co.uk](#)

Sir Keir Starmer has rejected calls to ban mobile phones for children under the age of 16. However, he is willing to consider restrictions on the content that young people can access online. Last year, Esther Ghey, the mother of murdered teenager Brianna Ghey, called for phones to be fitted with restrictions for under-16s. Miriam Cates, a former Tory MP, went further and said that those under 16 should not be able to have phones at all. The Prime Minister emphasised the need to look at the content and control of online content for children. He also expressed his willingness to sit down with anyone to discuss better protections for children's online safety.

Teacher advocates 'balanced approach' to smartphone use

[BBC News](#)

Deputy Head Sarah Owen of Stanwell School in Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan, says children should have a balanced approach when it comes to smartphone use. While the school has a long-standing rule against phone use on the premises, Owen emphasises the importance of children interacting with each other, playing sports, and having connections with others. Owen also highlights concerns about phone addiction, loss of concentration, and the negative effects of social media. Other schools in Wales have implemented total bans on mobiles, while Stanwell only requires students to keep their phones switched off in their bags.

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Tech giants need to step up and protect kids online

The Sun

Tech giants are still prioritising profits over the safety of kids online, according to the Children's Commissioner. Dame Rachel de Souza is calling for tougher rules and wants social media companies to consult with children before introducing potentially harmful features like AI chatbots. She believes that children are best placed to advise on the potential harms of new technology and warns against ignoring their voices. The current Children's Code, which is supposed to safeguard kids on the internet, is seen as protecting corporations rather than children. While the Online Safety Act allows for fines, Dame Rachel argues that tech companies need to engage more with children and ensure their platforms are safe by design. A survey conducted by the Children's Commissioner found that only a fifth of children felt they were being listened to by decision-makers.

Government acknowledges need for stronger online safety laws

Daily Mail The Times

Ministers have acknowledged that more needs to be done to strengthen online safety laws in the UK. The Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary, Peter Kyle, stated that the Government is committed to building on the Online Safety Act passed by the Conservatives last year. However, over 20 charities have called for the law to be strengthened, as they believe the draft rules issued by the regulator, Ofcom, are insufficient to protect children from harmful content. Mr. Kyle has assured that online safety is a priority and that he will work with charities and Ofcom to ensure the Act delivers the promised protections. Ofcom has stated that it is listening carefully to feedback from experts.

Bereaved parents gain access to children's social media

Daily Mail The Daily Telegraph The Times

Bereaved parents will now have access to their children's social media accounts under new data laws announced in the King's Speech. The Technology Secretary, Peter Kyle, will amend the law to ensure that coroners can access data from social media firms to understand the reasons behind a child's death. The move comes after a campaign by parents, including Ian Russell, who fought for five years to access his daughter's accounts after she died by suicide. The new laws will give coroners the power to unlock children's accounts and request data through Ofcom. Tech giants could face fines of up to 10% of their global revenue if they fail to cooperate. The Molly Rose Foundation, set up by Molly Russell's family, is calling for social media firms to be placed under a statutory duty of candour.

Children offered illegal drugs as birthday presents

BBC News

According to research by the outreach organisation Helix Arts, children have received illegal drugs as birthday presents and debt repayments. Young people in North Tyneside have been known to get drugs as gifts from family members or neighbours instead of purchasing them from traffickers. Additionally, the charity raised concerns that children are adapting vapes so they can consume narcotics, including MDMA, ketamine, and cocaine. The report to the North Tyneside Council further stated that a lack of socialisation during lockdown had made many young people uncomfortable in larger groups, leading to excess alcohol consumption.

Children using TikTok hacks to hide vapes

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

A warning has been issued to parents as children are using TikTok hacks to hide their vapes. Hospital admissions for vaping-related disorders among children have been rising, and experts warn that kids who use vapes are more likely to take up tobacco smoking. Despite being illegal, vaping has become common among children, with a Department of Health and Social Care report revealing a tripling of vaping among children in the UK over the last three years. Underage vape users have been sharing tips on social media to hide their vapes, with popular hiding spots including inside unused clothing, behind paintings and posters, inside stuffed toys, and in hollow compartments of items like hairbrushes.

How Boys are being Led to Misogyny

It will come as no surprise that social media is the avenue by which most people see misogynistic and other harmful content. In February 2024 a new report called 'Safer Scrolling' was released by Dr. Kaitlyn Regehr from University College London which contains useful, important data for schools and colleges on how boys are being targeted with misogynistic content, how social media companies are promoting that content and what teachers can do about it.

As part of the study it is shown that after only 5 days of TikTok usage there is a fourfold increase in the levels of misogynistic videos shown to teenage boys in their TikTok ForYou timeline.

For an interview-style executive summary from TES you can read [THIS](#) article. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

Digital Family Agreement

With the summer holidays just around the corner, now can be a great time for parents/carers to talk with their children and set ground rules, boundaries and expectations around tech use. The easiest way to do this is via a digital family agreement and London Grid for Learning have a really useful template which is free for anyone.

You can download the digital family agreement from LGfL [HERE](#).

School Age Team

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services have a dedicated school age team service for all children and their families from the age of 5 years up until they turn 19 years (or 25yrs for those with SEN).

The School Age Team consists of Specialist Community Public Health Nurses, School Nurses, Children and Young Person's Practitioners, and Healthy Family Support Practitioners who specialise in delivering care and support to school-aged children, young people, and their families within Schools, family homes, our Family Hubs and Delivery Sites and other community settings.

Support offered

- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Improving sleep
- Nutritional support
- Physical health complaints
- Sexual health
- Health needs assessment
- Managing health conditions
- Personal hygiene
- And much more- signposting, advice, and support

**Contact the school nurse team on
Tel:0300 247 0015
(Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)**

Services commissioned by:

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SHARING INTIMATE IMAGES

An intimate image depicts sensitive – often sexual – content, and sharing these photos or videos is commonly known as ‘sexting’. As of January 2024, it is a criminal offence to distribute any intimate images shared by a third party without consent, with offenders facing prison time. Naturally, misuse of intimate images can lead to emotional distress and reputational damage.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Victims of the misuse of intimate images and so-called ‘sexortion’ (blackmail involving sexual material) often experience significant emotional distress. The threat of having these photos or videos shared publicly can lead to anxiety, depression and a sense of helplessness. This emotional turmoil can affect daily life, academic performance and personal relationships.

DAMAGE TO REPUTATION

Intimate images being made public can severely damage a person’s reputation. This can lead to bullying, social ostracisation and long-term impacts on personal and professional relationships. If a blackmailer gets their hands on any intimate images, the fear of reputational damage can also make a victim far more vulnerable to ongoing extortion.

PRIVACY VIOLATIONS

Once intimate images are shared online, it can be difficult to quickly control where they wind up and who else sees them. This loss of privacy can have lifelong repercussions, including identity theft and persistent online harassment.

FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

Perpetrators of sextortion may demand money from victims under the threat of releasing their intimate images publicly. This can lead to severe financial problems for victims and their families, compounding their emotional and psychological distress.

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

If a child or young person creates and/or sends intimate images to others – especially adults – this is considered a form of child abuse under UK law. Having to disclose this type of abuse, although necessary, can be harrowing, leading to further trauma. It’s crucial for parents, carers and educators to understand the legal processes and be able to provide proper guidance and support.

TRUST ISSUES

Sharing of intimate images without consent can lead to long-term trust issues. Victims may find it difficult to trust others, impacting future relationships and their ability to form healthy, supportive connections. This erosion of trust can have profound effects on mental health and social wellbeing.

Advice for Parents & Educators

FOSTER A CULTURE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

It’s vital to encourage open communication with children and young people about the dangers of sharing intimate images. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable discussing their online activities and any concerns they may have without fear of judgement. Be sure to respond to any worrying information with an attitude of support and learning.

EDUCATE CHILDREN ON THE RISKS

Children and young people often want to understand why certain rules are in place. Educate them about the risks of sharing intimate images online, explaining the reasons for monitoring and other security measures. Highlight the potential for misuse, including sextortion, and the long-term consequences that can arise from these actions.

PROMOTE DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy is incredibly important for children and young people to understand how to protect their privacy online. Teach them about secure online practices, such as using strong passwords, enabling privacy settings and recognising suspicious behaviour. This empowers them to be proactive in terms of their own safety.

PROVIDE SUPPORT RESOURCES

Ensure that children and young people know where to seek help if they become victims of sextortion or any other online abuse. Help them identify in advance which adults they can turn to and provide them with information about trusted resources like helplines (e.g. Childline) that they can access if they need help.

Meet Our Expert

Gabriella Russo is a safeguarding and neurodiversity consultant with over 30 years’ experience working with children, families and adults in education, local authority and mental health settings in the UK and abroad.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: what-parents-need-to-know-about-sharing-intimate-images

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry and anxiety are common emotions experienced by children, often triggered by uncertainty or fear. While worry involves concern about future events, anxiety is a persistent feeling of dread or apprehension. Current statistics indicate a rising prevalence of anxiety disorders among children, and this guide has some expert advice on understanding and addressing these concerns.

UNDERSTANDING WORRY AND ANXIETY



Worry and anxiety are emotional responses to stress or uncertainty. Worry is typically associated with potential misfortune, while anxiety is characterised by feelings of fear, apprehension or unease. Both can manifest physically through symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue or muscle tension. Understanding the distinction between worry and anxiety is crucial for effectively addressing these concerns in children.

DIFFERENTIATING WORRY FROM ANXIETY



While worry and anxiety share similarities – in that they both involve concerns about possible trouble – anxiety tends to be more constant and overwhelming. Worry may come and go depending on circumstances, whereas anxiety can linger regardless of the situation. It's essential to recognise when the former crosses into the latter, as anxiety can significantly impact a child's daily functioning and wellbeing.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES



Untreated worry and anxiety in childhood can have potentially lifelong impacts on a person's mental health and wellbeing. Chronic anxiety may increase the risk of developing anxiety disorders, depression or other mental health conditions later in life. Additionally, unresolved worry and anxiety can negatively impact self-esteem, confidence and overall resilience. It's essential to address these concerns proactively and provide appropriate support and intervention.

THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN



Excessive worry and anxiety can have profound effects on children's mental and emotional health. It may interfere with their ability to concentrate, sleep or participate in daily activities. Chronic worry and anxiety can also lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches or difficulty breathing. Left unchecked, these concerns can escalate and potentially contribute to the development of anxiety disorders later in life.

THE EMOTIONAL TOLL



The emotional impact of worry and anxiety on children can be significant, affecting their overall quality of life and wellbeing. Children experiencing chronic worry or anxiety may feel overwhelmed, irritable or helpless. They may also withdraw from social activities or avoid situations that trigger their anxiety, leading to feelings of isolation or loneliness. Addressing these concerns early can help prevent long-term emotional distress and promote healthy coping strategies.

ACADEMIC & SOCIAL IMPACTS



Impacts on the academic performance and social interactions of children and young people are very possible. Frequent worry or anxiety may impair concentration, memory and problem-solving skills, making it difficult for children to succeed in education. Anxiety can also hinder social development by causing children and young people to avoid social situations or to struggle with communication and interpersonal relationships, potentially leading to feelings of isolation or exclusion.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Parents and educators can foster a supportive environment by encouraging children to express their worries and anxieties openly. Actively listening and acknowledging young people's emotions can help them feel understood and supported, reducing the situation's intensity. Creating opportunities for regular check-ins and discussions about one's feelings can promote healthy coping strategies and strengthen communication bonds.



CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Parents and educators play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that promotes emotional wellbeing. Establishing routines, providing predictability and offering reassurance can help relieve anxiety and create a sense of security for children. Foster a culture of empathy and understanding, where children feel safe enough to express their emotions and seek support when needed.



TEACH COPING STRATEGIES



Empowering children with effective coping strategies is essential for managing worry and anxiety. Encourage the use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation to calm anxious thoughts and promote a sense of composure. Additionally, teaching positive self-talk and problem-solving skills can help children develop resilience and confidence in managing challenging situations.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Recognising when to seek professional help is vital for addressing significant or persistent worry and anxiety in children. If worry or anxiety significantly impacts a child's daily functioning, interferes with their relationships or academic performance, or causes significant distress, it may be necessary to consult with a mental health practitioner. Early intervention can prevent long-term consequences and promote positive outcomes for children's psychological wellbeing.



Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, which collaborates with schools on improving their mental health provisions.



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