

The Gilbert School – November Safeguarding Snippets

Dear Parents/Carers

Please see below a set of articles or interesting news updates related to Safeguarding and Online activity/safety. As we know, our children are usually 10 steps ahead of us when it comes to technology, so I like to share any new information that I feel may be of use to parents.

Omegle Gone

There were some massive sighs of relief last week when, finally, Omegle was shut down for good. This one site, which allowed any person of any age to be randomly paired with another person for 1-1 video chat, was responsible for countless CSE incidents. According to an article in **Wired Magazine** the site shutdown was part of a court settlement after a victim filed a lawsuit in 2021 after being exploited when she was 11 years old.

Whilst this is great news, the question is what next? Remember Chatroulette from many years ago? It's still around and there's talk of this increasing in popularity; those who are determined will always find an alternative. It's always good to keep up with the latest apps and platforms that are being used by children and young people but we always have to default back to good education. It isn't about the app, it's about digital literacy - the ability to use, understand and critically assess the safe and appropriate use of technology.

Parent's Guide to WhatsApp

As one of the most popular messaging apps used by all age ranges and around 2.7 billion monthly users, WhatsApp has been adding new features over the last year or so which some parents may not be aware of. Internet Matters have put together a really good 'how-to' guide for parents which you can access via this link:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>

Experts call for fresh approach to tackle online child exploitation

A fresh approach is needed to tackle the "global pandemic" of online child exploitation, as the number of offences continues to rise exponentially, according to experts. Simon Bailey, former National Police Chiefs' Council lead for child protection, demanded that tech companies "put child safety before profit" and he also called for an education programme for children and parents into the risks of online sex abuse which is "reinforced in the curriculum at school." Mr Bailey said: "We cannot arrest our way out of this problem. We have tried, but the sheer volume of offenders continues to grow. Between 2012 and 2013 UK authorities arrested 192 offenders and safeguarded 790 children. Today, a decade on, we are catching 1,000 offenders a month and safeguarding 1,200 children. But in spite of this, the number of children sharing sexual images of themselves is growing."

[Sunday Express](#)

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Regulator unveils code to tackle terrorism, child abuse, and fraud

Ofcom has published a draft code of practice aimed at tackling terrorism, child abuse, grooming, assisting suicide, and fraud. The code will require social media apps to implement measures to protect children, including reducing their presence on platforms and preventing contact with strangers. Ofcom has been granted new powers under the Online Safety Act to regulate tech companies and can fine and block non-compliant firms. Melanie Dawes, CEO of Ofcom, warned that the regulator is prepared to use criminal sanctions if necessary. The code also addresses issues such as harassment and harmful experiences faced by teens on platforms like Instagram. Ofcom's proposals go beyond measures already introduced by TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram. The code also requires sites to block accounts run by proscribed organisations and introduces measures to combat fraud and child sex abuse. Ofcom aims to enforce the code by the end of 2024.

[The Times](#)

Illegal vaping could kill children, warns teacher

Glyn Potts, head teacher of Saint John Henry Newman Catholic College in Oldham, has warned that illegal vaping could kill a child, after the collapse of a 12-year-old pupil who had used a vape containing spice - an illegal synthetic drug. Mr Potts said he was confident children could not vape in school but he was worried about incidents away from the premises. He said: "If they are collapsing in the street or in areas where they are not necessarily going to be found quickly, that gives me nightmares." He also said he had been told young people were using the tram network to obtain illicit vapes such as these from dealers in other parts of Greater Manchester. In total, there have been four incidents this year in the Oldham area involving vapes found to have contained spice or THC.

[BBC News](#)

SAFEGUARDING

Half of teenagers witness or experience violence, landmark report reveals

Half of all teenagers in England and Wales witnessed or were victims of violence last year, according to a landmark report. The survey, which included 7,500 teenagers, revealed "shocking and unacceptable" levels of youth violence, with 358,000 teenagers physically injured. Meanwhile, one in five teenagers admitted they had skipped school during the last 12 months because they felt unsafe, according to the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). A third of teenagers in families who rely on food banks were found to be victims of violence in the last year. Levels of violence were most pronounced among vulnerable children, with 37% of teenagers who are supported by a social worker admitting that they had been a victim. Jon Yates, executive director of the YEF, said: "The public, including my friends, tend to think this issue affects a very small group of people instead of recognising that actually half of all teenage children are seeing or experiencing violence." He added: "Adults, whether politicians or not, need to recognise that levels of violence are unacceptably high. This is not playground mucking about, when you consider the numbers getting properly injured or changing their behaviour because of fear of violence. However, the YEF is most concerned over how few perpetrators of violence receive sufficient mentoring or therapy to amend their behaviour."

The Observer