

Mowbray Safeguarding Bulletin

July 2024 – The Summer holidays are here and we hope families have a wonderful Summer. We know that many children and young people will be using electronic devices over this period and with this in mind we have put together some supportive information for those who require it. We have also shared other support and advice contacts.

Online Safety

The online world continues to develop and is both a vital learning tool, but also an area of risk for children and young people. There is plenty of information for parents and carers on the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website to raise awareness of online dangers.

Games, consoles, smart devices and how to keep your child safe

<https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/parents-carers/parent-info/games-consoles-smart-devices-and-how-to-keep-your-children-safe/>

Online Safety <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/parents-carers/online-safety/>

Reporting online images of my child <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/parents-carers/parent-info/reporting-images-online/>

Managing anxiety in children and young people - Young Minds

As we come towards the end of the academic year, many children will be moving on, some within the school and others to new places. Almost all young people will feel anxious to some extent and for some this anxiety can become overwhelming. Young Minds has really helpful information and advice for understanding and supporting a young person with anxiety, including resources to signpost them to.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-a-young-person-struggling-with-anxiety/>

Water Safety

As we approach the holiday season it is also worth keeping in mind the risks from open water and open water swimming. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service have produced some informative videos about water safety and the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership have developed some guidance for parents and carers which can be accessed from their website <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/parents-carers/water-safety/>

Gambling

A 2023 [report](#) from the Gambling Commission found that 40% of 11 to 17-year-olds had some experience of gambling in the preceding 12 months. That's a significant number of children and young people involved in an over 18's activity. Engagement and exposure to gambling can impact one's finances, mental health and wellbeing. It is crucial we are all aware of the risks and know how to protect and support our children. It is quite challenging to protect our children against exposure to gambling at any time, but especially around major sports events like Euro 2024.

Upskirting

On Friday 7th June between 8.20 - 8.40am a man lifted up a girl's skirt and took a photo. The man is estimated to be either late teens or early twenties. The man followed an 11 year old school girl (not an RGS student) who was walking to school along Allhallowsgate and Priest Lane in Ripon. When she stopped at some lights the man lifted up her skirt and took a photo on his phone.

Form tutors have spoken to their tutor groups to remind them to be vigilant and where possible walk home in pairs. If a student thinks they are being followed they have been advised to do the following:

Keep Calm

If you're on foot, stop to look at a store window or check your phone, while staying aware of your surroundings. Use that time to gather your thoughts, do a little deep breathing, and take stock of what's happening around you.

Pay attention

We do a lot of things on auto-pilot. If you think someone's stalking/following you, make a point of being extra observant.

Mix things up

People make wrong turns all the time, but it's rare for two people to make the same wrong turn at the same time. If you sense someone's following you, try a short detour. Turn away from your destination, and then double back. If a potential stalker mimics your manoeuvre, your suspicions may be warranted. If this happens, head to a public place or police station.

Go where the people are

Instead of walking home on your usual route, go into a busy coffee shop. Crowds can help deter stalkers from continuing to follow you or approaching you, as there are too many witnesses around.

Break out your phone

Call a friend or family member, tell them where you are, and stay on the phone with them until you feel comfortable.

Call the police

If you feel you are in immediate danger, don't hesitate to contact the police. Call 999, tell the dispatcher you are being followed and you are in danger.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

YOUTUBE

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Almost anyone with an internet connection knows YouTube. The Google-owned site lets anyone upload videos to be shared around the world, and as a result, it's an incredible resource with instant free access to material covering every conceivable topic. But with over 500 hours of video uploaded every minute, not all of it will be appropriate for young eyes.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

YouTube is free and can be accessed via numerous devices, even without creating a YouTube account. Some content is flagged as 'age-restricted' (requiring the user to be logged into an account with a verified age of 18), but children can still view some mildly inappropriate content. This can include profanity and violence, which some young users may find upsetting.

CONNECT WITH STRANGERS

YouTube recommends videos related to what the user has previously watched on their account, aiming to provide content that will interest them. This is intended to be helpful but it can also lead to binge-watching and screen addiction – especially if 'auto-play' is active. Users without an account are shown popular videos from the last 24 hours, which might not always be suitable for children.

RADICALISATION

YouTube's algorithm tends to promote content that's getting the most traffic – a lot of which can be quite extreme. This can be fine for harmless topics, but YouTube isn't regulated like television, and that means that conspiracy theories, fake news and hateful ideologies can occasionally surface to warp impressionable minds all too easily. Remember – the more they watch, the more they'll be recommended.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

YouTube is a social media platform which allows people to interact with other (usually unknown) users. Account holders can leave comments on any video they have access to, as well as message other users directly. Connecting with strangers online can potentially lead to children being exposed to adult language, cyberbullying and – in the worst cases – online predators. If a child is creating content themselves, this can increase the likelihood of them becoming a target.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

YouTube is teeming with trends and challenges, some of which are fun to watch and join in with. Children often find these immensely entertaining and might want to try them out. Most challenges tend to be safe, but many others may cause physical or emotional harm children who watch or copy them. The painful 'salt and ice challenge' – where people use these two ingredients to burn their skin – is just one of many examples.

SNEAKY SCAMMERS

The comments sections of popular content creators regularly have scammers posing as that influencer, attempting to lure users into clicking on their phishing links. Scammers impersonate YouTubers by adopting their names and profile images, and often offer cash gifts or 'get rich quick' schemes. Children may not realise that these users aren't who they claim to be.

Advice for Parents & Educators

APPLY RESTRICTED MODE

For older children, Restricted Mode is an optional setting that prevents YouTube from showing inappropriate material (such as drug and alcohol abuse, graphic violence, and sexual content) to underage viewers. To prevent children from changing across age-inappropriate content on the platform, we would recommend enabling Restricted Mode on each device that they use to access YouTube. It's worth also turning the auto-play feature off, to prevent YouTube's algorithm automatically recommending something inappropriate.

18
CENSORED

TRY GOOGLE FAMILY

Creating a Google Family account allows parents and carers to monitor what their child is watching, uploading, and sharing with other users. It will also display their recently watched videos, searches, and recommended videos. In general, a Google Family account gives a parent or carer oversight of how their child uses sites like YouTube and helps to ensure that they are only accessing appropriate content.

MONITOR ENGAGEMENT

YouTube is the online viewing platform of choice for billions of people, many of them under 18. Younger children will watch different content to older ones, of course. You may want to keep an eye on how children interact with this material – and, if applicable, with content creators – to understand what they're interested in. Remember that creators often share content outside of YouTube, so don't ignore their web presence elsewhere!

CONSIDER YOUTUBE KIDS

It's possible to sidestep most inappropriate content completely via Google's own YouTube Kids app for Android handsets and iPhone. This lets you filter content by "preschool" (4 and under), "younger" (ages 5 to 8) and "older" (ages 9 to 12). This isn't a perfect substitute for personal supervision, as the app's filtering system is automated, and Google can't manually review all videos.

CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

YouTube gives users the option of uploading videos as 'private' or 'unlisted' – so they could be shared exclusively with family and friends, for example. Comments on videos can also be disabled and channels that a child is subscribed to can be hidden. If the child is only uploading videos set as 'private', they are far less likely to receive direct messages from strangers.

LIMIT SPENDING

Although YouTube is free, it does offer some in-app purchases. For example, users can rent and buy TV shows and movies to watch. If you'd like to avoid children purchasing content online, limit their access to online payment methods. Many parents have discovered the hard way that a child happily consuming a paid-for series quickly leads to an unexpected bill!

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard and The New Statesman.



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

ROBLOX

Roblox is one of the most popular video games among children. In 2020, the game's developers claimed that more than half of the USA's children had played it. As a 'sandbox' title, the game lets players create their own gaming experiences with RobloxStudio to build custom levels, which can then be shared online.

AGE RATING
PEGI
7

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Roblox encourages players to interact online (including a group chat function), which could expose children to various risks. Scammers often attempt to trick young Roblox fans into exchanging their paid-for items for something which turns out to be of much lesser value – or something they never even receive. The in-game chat has some filters, but it isn't perfect: players can still send unpleasant messages, while predators can reach out to children directly.

PUBLIC SERVERS

Roblox has private or VIP servers which allow people to play exclusively with their friends, but this costs money – usually a one-off payment. Most Roblox players will instead be on public servers that anyone can join. Servers can host games which focus on all kinds of aspects, including direct player interaction. Some lobbies, therefore, will put children at greater risk of contact from strangers than others.

ONLINE DATERS

These are also called 'ODers' and are quite common in Roblox. An ODER is an individual who joins a game with the intention of finding someone to date online – and eventually meet in person. Such online dating is against the Roblox community guidelines, but this doesn't usually deter such people. Some player-built Roblox levels have even been designed with online dating specifically in mind, and this will not always be obvious.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Roblox is free to download and play, but bear in mind that there are some extra costs. These are usually indicated with the symbol for 'Robux' (the in-game currency). Players are encouraged to make purchases in the game using real money. People can also buy extra Robux to spend on cosmetic items in the game, and it's also possible to purchase a private or VIP server.

Advice for Parents & Educators

SET PARENTAL CONTROLS

Roblox comes with several parental control options, which are explained well on the game's official website. It's essential to enter the correct date of birth for younger players, as that allows Roblox to automatically apply appropriate chat filters. The game also allows parents and carers to set monthly spending restrictions and monitor their child's account.

DISABLE PRIVATE MESSAGING

Roblox's private messaging function raises the risk of children being contacted by people they may not want to speak with – potentially leading to bullying, harassment, toxicity and scam attempts. Keep in mind that the game allows you to disable messages from anyone who hasn't been added as a friend on your account.

PRIVATE SERVERS

If a child has friends to play Roblox with, paying for a private or VIP server decreases the risk of contact from strangers. Even then, however, the player who owns the server could invite other people – who might not be child friendly – to join them. Additionally, private servers can be set up in such a way that any player on the host's friends list can join, so it's important to discuss who children are playing with.

MONITOR SPENDING

If they don't understand they're using real money, it's easy for children to accidentally spend a sizeable amount in the game. Using parental controls to place limits on their spending will help avoid any nasty financial surprises. Ensuring that two-factor authentication is enabled on any payment accounts also makes it harder for children to spend money inadvertently.

DEALING WITH STRANGERS

At some point in their development, children must learn how to deal with strangers online. Show them how to block and report any users who are upsetting them or asking uncomfortable questions. Talking to them about what's okay to discuss – and what they should never tell a stranger – can help them understand how to communicate more safely with other people online.

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



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Sources: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/7/21/21333431/roblox-over-half-of-us-kids-playing-virtual-parties-fortnite>
<https://corp.roblox.com/parents/>

