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wqe | Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I College

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

EXTREMISM DEFINITION CHANGE

On 14 March 2024 the government announced a new definition of extremism that says:

“Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:

- (1) negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
- (2) undermine, overturn or replace the UK’s system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
- (3) intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in (1) or (2).”

This updated definition of extremism will be used by government departments and officials alongside a set of engagement principles, to ensure Government is not inadvertently providing a platform, funding or legitimacy to groups or individuals who attempt to advance extremist ideologies.

Currently, the scope of the definition and principles is UK ministerial central government departments only, so the Department for Education (DfE) are not asking any education settings to adopt the definition or apply the principles.

Instead, schools should continue to follow existing statutory guidance on safeguarding and the Prevent Duty and implement their policies in the same way.

The DfE will be reviewing existing guidance to account for the recent announcement in due course to consider changes.

SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

Researchers at the University of Birmingham have published an interesting study 'Smartphones, Social Media and Adolescent mental well-being: the impact of school policies (2023)' as part of their ongoing research called the 'SMART Schools study'. Scan the QR code below or click on the image to view the report.



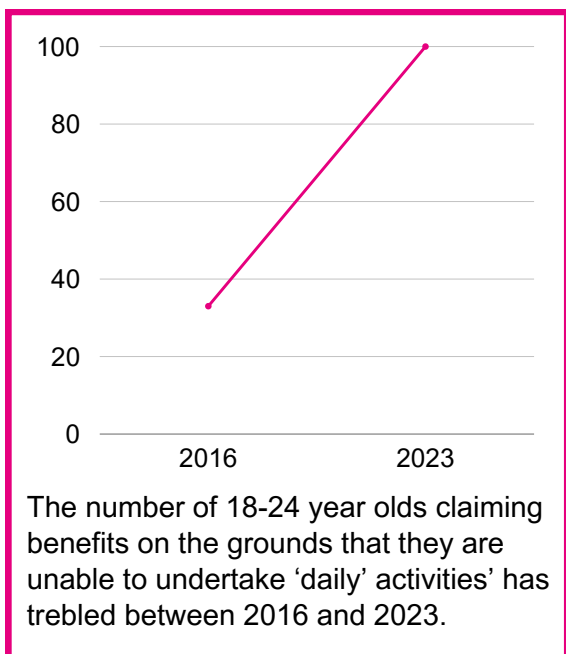
UNDERSTANDING THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

An article for the Sixth Form College Association has provided further insight into the current state of mental health in young people. Although it has been previously suggested that the crisis situation we are now facing is linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is strong evidence to suggest that there is a longer term trend, and that **students with mental health problems are reportedly 3 times more likely to underachieve academically.**



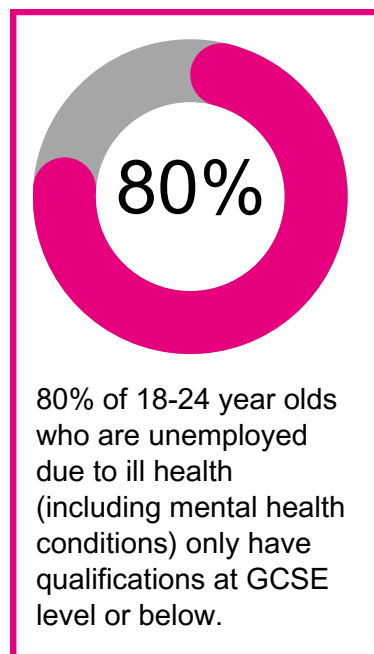
In 2021-2022, more than 1 in 3 young people aged between 18-24 reported symptoms indicating a CMD (common mental disorder - such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder - previously referred to as manic depression). In 2020, this figure was 25%. Additionally, the number of young people prescribed antidepressants has risen by 31% since 2015-2016.

Between 2018-2022, 21% of 18-24 year olds with mental health challenges were workless, compared to 13% without. The overall number of young people who are not currently 'economically active' (contributing actively to the economy through paid work, paid placements and paid apprenticeships) has doubled over the last decade, with the result being that individuals in their 20s are more likely to be 'economically inactive' than those in their 40s.



In 2023, 44% of children and young people had access to Mental Health Support Teams...

...this figure was especially low (31%) for students in post-16 colleges.



WHAT ARE WE DOING?

THE REPORT CALLS FOR...

Greater mental health support to be available for those in compulsory education, particularly colleges and sixth forms.

- We have two Wellbeing Advisors and two Designated Mental Health Leads who work alongside a team of mentors to offer mental health support.
- We offer in-house counselling through Relate
- We have the Wisdom app available offering 24/7 support.
- We are also recruiting a team of Student Positive Mental Health Ambassadors to help signpost students to internal and external services.

More to be done to ensure fewer people leave compulsory education with very low qualification levels, with students needing to resit GCSE level qualifications being the priority.

WQE are developing tailored Level 2 pathways for students to motivate and encourage those needing to re-sit core GCSE qualifications and ensure they are supported effectively to move onto Level 3 study, or become 'economically active' with a strong foundation for success.

For further information about how we are working to support our young people, please contact welfareandskills@wqe.ac.uk

What You Should Know About... **Sextortion**



What is it?

Sextortion is a 'cyber-enabled crime' in which victims are lured into sharing intimate photos/videos or behaving in a sexual way in front of a camera. Unbeknownst to the victims, their actions have been recorded or saved by criminals who blackmail the victim by threatening to release the image or footage.

Nearly *two-thirds* of 'gen-z' teens, said they or their friends have been the targets of sextortion.

Come on cutie, we've been flirting all week. You know you wanna

If you send one, i'll send one back

Just for you... don't show anyone

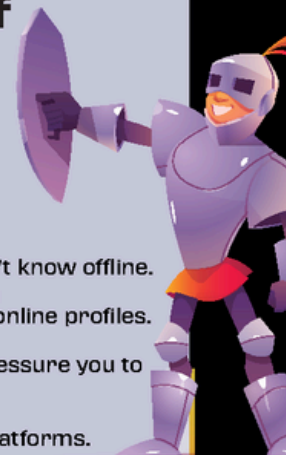
View Photo

PAY ME £500 RIGHT NOW. Or that image is being shared online and all your friends and family will see it.

How to Protect Yourself

There are steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of sextortion:

- ❌ **DON'T** share intimate photos or videos on an online platform.
- ❌ **DON'T** agree to requests for nude photos/videos or perform intimate acts over a video call.
- ❌ **DON'T** accept friend requests/messages from people you don't know offline.
- ❌ **DON'T** include sensitive and/or personal information on your online profiles.
- ✅ **DO** remember that anyone who truly cares for you will not pressure you to do something uncomfortable.
- ✅ **DO** be mindful of who you accept as friends on social media platforms.
- ✅ **DO** strengthen your social media privacy settings.
- ✅ **DO** question who it is you are really speaking to online.



ANYONE can become a victim of sextortion.

How does it happen?

Victims are usually targeted in online spaces - such as social media platforms or dating apps.

The offender often uses a fake identity to seem more appealing to potential victims. Once a victim has been targeted, offenders quickly befriend them before the blackmail begins.

During the 'friendship', the offender will introduce the topic of sex and begin encouraging the victim to remove items of clothing while on camera or to send them a nude image.

After the victim has done so, the offender reveals they have recorded the entire interaction and threatens to publicly expose the victim if they do not either send a sum of money or more photos/videos.

Help and Advice

If you or someone you know has become a victim of sextortion, you are not alone. It is important to stay calm and take the following actions:

- 👉 **IGNORE** their demands and do not pay up.
- ❌ **END** all communication on every channel.
- 📷 **CAPTURE** evidence of blackmail including usernames.
- 👤 **TALK** to a trusted friend or family member, even if it's embarrassing.
- 📞 **CONTACT** the police immediately - time is of the essence!
- 🚫 **BLOCK** the offender on all platforms and change your password.
- 🚩 **REPORT** the individual to the relevant website or app provider.
- 🤔 **CONSIDER** if you or the victim will need a suicide prevention plan.

Never screenshot or capture a copy of material that involves an indecent image of a child.



It is illegal to create, possess or distribute indecent images of children. In situations where a child has taken and shared a nude image of themselves, the law does not unfairly punish that child and will handle their case sensitively.

FACT

Remember! **Sextortion is a serious crime.**

You are not at fault, and it's important to report it promptly to the police to protect yourself and to stop the perpetrator.

The Impact of Sextortion

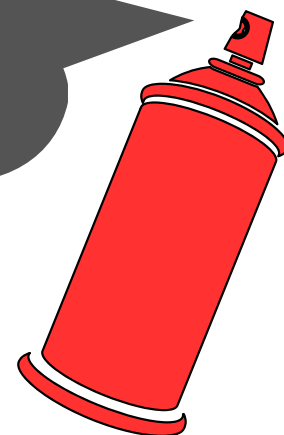
Once the victim realises what has happened, panic sets in and they are left feeling violated, afraid, embarrassed, ashamed, alone, or even suicidal.

Support

If you are feeling overwhelmed, there are people who can support you through this. **There is always hope and help available.**



CONCERNING NEW SOCIAL MEDIA 'CHALLENGE'



You might have heard about a recent, tragic incident involving an 11-year-old boy in Lancashire who lost his life after reportedly taking part in a dangerous trend called '**CHROMING**' during a sleepover. Chroming involves inhaling various chemicals like aerosols, nitrous oxide, solvents, and nitrites, also known variously as nangs, nossies, whippets, and bullets. This activity is associated with a euphoric high, but carries potentially fatal risks, including heart and lung damage, as well as harm to brain and behavioural development.

While inhalant abuse is not a new phenomenon, what is particularly concerning is how this trend is spreading globally through social media. A 13-year-old girl in Australia died in 2023, suffering a heart attack after inhaling chemicals from a deodorant can during a sleepover. Similarly, a 14-year-old from Ireland who died after inhaling aerosol is suspected to have been influenced by seeing the challenge on TikTok.

The UK government updated the law on November 8th, 2023, to classify nitrous oxide as a Class C drug, subjecting those who misuse or possess with the intent to misuse it to criminal penalties. However, many solvents abused in chroming, like glue, permanent markers, and deodorant cans, are widely accessible everyday items, so inherently harder to police.

There are various methods of inhalation that are used when chroming, therefore it can be difficult to control the dosage. This danger increases significantly in enclosed spaces or when covering the face with items such as plastic bags.

- **Spraying** – Spraying the contents of an aerosol container directly into the mouth or nose.
- **Bagging** – Spraying the contents of an aerosol container into a paper or plastic bag to be held over the person's mouth or nose for inhalation.
- **Sniffing** – Sniffing the fumes directly from the container.
- **Huffing** – Soaking a rag with the inhalant and holding it to the face for inhalation.

The iNEQE Safeguarding Group have provided a helpful resource (source) which can be accessed by clicking the image below or scanning the QR code.



Reporting Harmful Content

Leading by Example

Recent research has shown that children and young people are very unlikely to take action, such as reporting or flagging to the platform, when they see harmful content and behaviours online. So why is that?



What Inappropriate Content Are Children and Young People Seeing Online?

Unfortunately, children and young people are likely to be the target of some types of inappropriate content and abusive behaviours that adults won't be. This includes grooming attempts, trolling, and cyberbullying from their classmates or peer group.

REPORT

WHY DON'T CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT ONLINE ABUSE AND HARMFUL CONTENT?



Shame and Embarrassment

Becoming a target for bullying or online abuse can be a source of embarrassment for a child or young person as they may feel like they have done something wrong or that there's something 'wrong' with them.



If a child or young person has accidentally seen or been sent something that has sexual context, they may feel awkward discussing the subject matter.

Getting in Trouble

Children and young people could be concerned about their parents' reactions: will they be cross and think the child was looking at something online they shouldn't be?



They may also misunderstand the legalities around harmful illegal content and think they will be in trouble for simply viewing it. They may worry about the police or their school getting involved.

Built-up Tolerance and Acceptance

Unfortunately, children and young people may just be 'used to it' when it comes to seeing inappropriate and harmful content online. The prevalence at which they encounter this type of material or come across abusive content might mean that it's accepted as part of the normal experience of being online and just 'background noise' they block out.



Not Knowing What to Do

Every app, platform and website have their own processes for dealing with harmful content and a different interface for doing so.



Although many children and young people are very tech-savvy, this doesn't mean that they are all equipped with the knowledge of how to report or flag things online.

HATE

STUPID

Nearly 1/3 of children say they sometimes do nothing when they are upset or worried about something online.

22% of users said they did not take action as they didn't think that doing so would make a difference.

1/3 of 12-17-year-olds said that they knew how to use a reporting or flagging function but only 14% said they had used any of them.

FAT

FAST FACTS

The Online Nation Report 2022

UGLY

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO REPORT ONLINE ABUSE AND INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Talk and Listen!



Talking to a child or young person about how to stay safe online may help reduce the chances of them viewing inappropriate content or being susceptible to grooming etc. Build a relationship in which the child or young person in your care feels secure and confident to confide in you and openly discuss things that upset them.

Encourage conversations about online experiences, both good and bad.



Reassure them that simply reporting content won't get them in trouble nor will talking to you about something they've seen online that upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable.



If your child does come to you to talk about something they've seen online, stay calm. Although you might be shocked or even angry at them for using a site or app you told them not to, having a strong emotional reaction may put them off coming to you again in the future.

Learn Together



Sit down with the child or young person in your care, learn how to do report, flag and block on each platform. Remember, lots of people are visual learners so have your phone or digital device handy so you can all see exactly where the buttons are on the actual platform.

Be An Example



One of the best things we can do to help children and young people stay safer online is to lead by example. Just like in the offline world, the children in your care look to the trusted adults around them for guidance on how to navigate, react and interact in this world.



Show and talk to the children in your care about what you do when you come across harmful content and bad online behaviour. This could be as simple as mentioning that you saw a bullying comment online, so you reported it to the platform.

If you're someone who usually scrolls past abusive or harmful content, ask yourself, 'would I want my or any child to see this?'

If the answer is no, take action!

Online Safety Shareable by

INEQE
SAFEGUARDING GROUP

f i t
ineqe.com



oursafetycentre.co.uk

Use our Safety Centre to learn together how to enable the most appropriate safety settings and use parental controls on apps and platforms that the child or young person in your care uses.



WQE FOCUS GROUPS

STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS WILL BE TAKING PLACE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS TO HELP US TO GAUGE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF KEY COLLEGE PRIORITIES.

WELFARE MENTORS WILL BE VISITING PPM GROUPS TO SPEAK TO STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES OF WELFARE & SKILLS, SAFEGUARDING AND PPM SESSIONS.

THE COMMENTS WE RECEIVE FROM STUDENTS WILL HELP US TO REFINE WHAT WE'RE ALREADY DOING AND PLAN PROVISION FOR 25/26.

Everything You Need to Know about...

'Finstas'

While we are seeing social media platforms introduce features that focus on curating content for your 'close friend' groups, another trend is seeing a resurgence in popularity with children and young people in the UK.

A 'finsta' (a slang term that combines 'fake' and 'Insta', a popular shortened title for 'Instagram') may be the new choice of account for younger generations.

What is a Finsta?

Surely a finsta is a fake Instagram account? Not exactly. A finsta is not the same thing as a fake account (which often engages in scam-like behaviour). Instead, a 'finsta' refers to a secondary account where a user's identity and profile are typically hidden, with access only available to a chosen group of friends or followers.

It can be on any platform, including TikTok and Facebook, but Instagram seems to be the most popular choice. These accounts often use pseudonyms to avoid using real names.

Why would a young person create a finsta?

Authenticity
allows them to be 'real' with their close friends.

Connection
with the social media content they want to see.

Anonymity
means not worrying about their public image.

Freedom
to post without anxiety over reception or 'like count'.

Privacy
to explore 'niche' interests separately from 'real' account.

Top Tips for Parents and Carers

Remind the young person in your care that nothing they post online is truly private and to think before posting. There are multiple ways their posts could be misconstrued or misused by others.

Go through the process of protecting the images they post. Discussing things like copyright and reporting will help empower the young person in your care to make smart choices and to know there is help available if they need it.

Reinforce the importance of protecting personal information. Remind your young person not to share any personal details with anyone they do not know in real life, even if they feel comfortable.

Have an open, non-judgemental conversation about finstas (and other secondary accounts). If they have one, ask about the type of content they are posting and what they feel is the benefit of having different accounts.

Support their decision to have private accounts, but ask if you can check in with them around the material they are posting and the people they are interacting with. Remember - boundaries are important to create an environment of trust and comfort.

Risks

My-Finsta-Account What are the Risks?

Unexpected behaviour - Anonymity might encourage young people to engage in unlikely behaviour, such as posting sexually explicit content, pursuing dangerous political ideals, or bullying.

Missed help - Worrying posts hidden from public view may not be addressed by the appropriate help, especially if it involves self-harm or other destructive behaviours.

Unwanted exposure - Others with access to the account may take screenshots of posts and send them to others, or reveal the identity of the account owner.

Harmful opinions - Extremist behaviour or insensitive language in 'opinion pieces' may expose young people to others with harmful intentions and could implicate them in illegal activity.

Social interaction - A young person may be approached by other users with malicious intentions. This could leave them vulnerable to sexual manipulation, grooming, bullying, and exploitation.



32 likes

According to the 2020/21 [Ofcom](#) report, two-thirds of 8-11-year-olds in the UK had multiple accounts or profiles, with almost half of them running an account just for their family to see.