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SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

NETFLIX SERIES - ADOLESCENCE

The highly praised Netflix series, Adolescence, created by BAFTA winner Jack Thorne and Broadcasting Press Guild Award Best Actor Stephen Graham, is more than just compelling drama – it's a poignant lens through which we can examine the complexity of safeguarding in today's world. At its core, the series explores how a single act of serious violence can ripple outward, affecting families, peers, communities and systems for years to come.

Key Safeguarding Themes in Adolescence





What makes Adolescence so thought-provoking is its unflinching look at some of the most difficult safeguarding issues:






- Toxic masculinity
- Child-on-child abuse
- The grief that follows tragedy
- The stark disconnect often felt between generations



These are not just plot points. They are real, daily concerns for Designated Safeguarding Leads and education professionals.

A Guide to Emojis used in Adolescence:

-  **Red Pill** = In reference to the film 'The Matrix', taking the red pill means you have learnt the 'truth' around gender dynamics. It is used to promote masculinity and misogyny.
-  **Dynamite/Explosion** = When used alongside the red pill, this means a person has become an 'involuntary celibate' or 'incel'.
-  **Kidney Beans** = This is used to identify someone or self-identify as an incel.
-  **100** = This refers to the '80/20 rule'. 80% of women are attracted to 20% of men. Incels believe the most dominant men are 'hoarding' the majority of women.

-  **Red Heart** = Love.
-  **Purple Heart** = Horny.
-  **Yellow Heart** = "I'm interested, are you interested?"
-  **Pink Heart** = "I'm interested but not in sex."
-  **Orange Heart** = "You're going to be fine."





Navigating Masculinity

The Media's Influence on Young Males

Masculinity



Understanding masculinity is key to comprehending how it could become negative. Masculinity is a term for qualities or behaviours that people associate with being a boy/man. Being strong and brave are examples of what society traditionally expects from men.





It is important to note that not all masculinity is toxic.

It is ok for boys and men to be strong and brave in healthy ways. However, it becomes an issue when some of these ideas of 'being a man' become more extreme.

Toxic Masculinity



The phrase toxic masculinity refers to when the ideas of masculinity and 'being a man' become harmful and extreme. People who promote toxic masculinity believe to 'be a man' you must:

-  **Never show any feelings or emotions:** This means being strong all the time, not crying or feeling sad – even if you are.
-  **Be aggressive and tough:** You must always be ready to fight or be in charge, even if it hurts others.
-  **Hide your weaknesses:** You can never ask for support/advice or admit you are wrong – that makes you vulnerable.
-  **Think you are stronger and better than girls or women:** This is disrespectful and untrue.

Recently on social media, the more harmful extremist views of what defines masculinity have increased in popularity.

Core Messages of Toxic Masculinity



Young men can be influenced into these harmful communities through the promotion of ideals such as:

Advocating for Dominant Male/Submissive Female Roles - promoting exaggerated male characteristics like physical strength, focusing on the idea of the 'alpha male'. This is usually paired with the ideal that women are meant to be obedient and submissive to men.

Men's Rights - focusing on promoting 'men's rights', framing their content as a 'solution' to the increase of women's rights. This can seem relatable to young men who feel excluded by the equality movement, especially regarding feminism.

Emotional Engagement - claiming to empathise with the struggles that young men face such as exclusion, rejection or confusion about society's expectations. They often promise a future of wealth and relationships if their promoted lifestyle is followed. This makes content relatable for vulnerable young people while also giving them hope.







The buzz around Netflix's Adolescence sparks discussions on the impact of negative masculinity portrayals on young people.

The show highlights a growing concern: young males whilst online, are increasingly exposed to harmful, extremist views of what it is to be masculine. To address this, it's crucial to promote healthier models of masculinity, emphasising emotional expression, self-awareness, and helping young men critically engage with, rather than be unquestioningly influenced by online content.

Signs a Child May Be Affected by Toxic Masculinity









Although valuing masculinity is not always toxic, it is important to be aware of the signs that a child may be influenced by extremist views.

-  Withdrawal from friends/family
-  Repressing emotions and rejecting support
-  Low self-esteem and insecurity
-  Speaking negatively about women (e.g., appearance, relationships)
-  Excessive time spent on specific websites/apps
-  Obsession with physical appearance

Top Tips for Having Supportive Conversations








Engage in conversations about:

-  **Healthy relationships** and treating girls/women respectfully.
-  **Healthy masculinity**, model emotional expression and self-awareness.
-  **Use parental controls** on social media to monitor screen time and limit harmful content consumed.
-  **Ensure** the young people in your care know who their trusted adults are, that they can confide in if they are anxious about content they find online.
-  **Introduce** positive male role models who embody healthy masculinity.
-  **Educate** the young people in your care about how they can critically evaluate online content.

Language and Symbols



Discriminatory language and harmful emojis used in extremist online communities play a role in creating a culture that normalises harmful views of masculinity.

-  **Red pill** – A reference to the film The Matrix. If you are a 'red pill', you are 'waking up' to a 'reality' of the world being against you because women are in charge/only attractive men are successful.
-  **Black pill** – This refers to accepting the belief that women choose sexual partners based on predetermined genetic features and a man cannot change this.
-  **The 80 to 20 rule** – The belief that 80% of women are only attracted to 20% of men.
-  **Kidney bean/coffee beans** - Used to call someone or self-identify as an incel (involuntary celibate).
-  **Alphas and Betas** - Alphas are believed to be confident men who are leaders. Betas are believed to be submissive, weak men.

EDURESEARCHING PODCAST



In episode 13 of the 'EduResearching' podcast, Dr Steve Murray is joined by **Matt Pinkett**. Matt is an English teacher who is passionate about researching **gender and masculinity** in schools. In this podcast, he speaks about **how to combat misogyny in schools**. We are delighted that Matt will be visiting WQE later in the year to speak to our students about such important topics.

Scan the QR code or click the microphone picture to listen to the podcast. Matt begins speaking from 06:40.



THE MANY FACES OF ONLINE SCAMS: FOUR KEY DECEPTIONS TARGETED AT CHILDREN

When many people think about online scams, they think about financial scams targeted at older people, or at adults in general. However, children are also the targets of deceptive behaviour online. The London School of Economics have published a report on this and have concluded that there are multiple ways that children are manipulated and deceived online.

DECEPTIVE DESIGN

Deceptive Design refers to any features of digital products that manipulate users into choosing options that go against their "best interests." This includes blockades that hinder app navigation through pop-ups, encouraging parasocial interaction or lures to increase the time and money spent on the platform, as well as advertising manipulations.

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse encompasses any criminal activity involving the use of technology to sexually abuse or exploit children. This includes the production, distribution, and possession of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), as well as online grooming and enticement of children for sexual purposes.

AI-RELATED MANIPULATION

AI related manipulation refers to the misuse of artificial intelligence to deceive, exploit, or harm children. These methods have become increasingly sophisticated and difficult to detect, thereby elevating the risks for children online. Examples of AI related manipulation include AI-generated content, personalised manipulation, and amplified sextortion (see more on the next page).

GAMING-RELATED RISKS

Online games offer many benefits to children like problem-solving skills and opportunities for play but also pose potential risks. These may include addictive designs, pathways to gambling and the use of loot boxes by companies to drive up profits.

[CLICK HERE](#) OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ MORE ON THIS TOPIC.



So-called 'sextortion' is a form of online exploitation where perpetrators use intimate images or videos of a young person to blackmail them. They may demand additional images, money, or even coerce victims into recruiting others. While sextortion can happen to anyone, teenagers and young adults are particularly vulnerable.



THE USE OF AI TECHNOLOGY

There has been a worrying increase in the use of AI-generated indecent images of young people within 'sextortion' cases. Offenders obtain innocent images of a young person, often from their social media profiles, and superimpose it onto an explicit image or video, making it appear that they are engaging in a sexual act on camera.

Even if a young person has never shared a sexual image of themselves, they can still be a victim of 'sextortion' through the use of this technology and the threat and impact can be



just as real. Remember, this technology is extremely advanced and can trick most people into thinking it is a real image or video.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE?

Feeling trapped in a 'sextortion' scam can feel overwhelming, inducing fear, panic and a range of other complex emotions including humiliation, stigma and shame. The perpetrator plays on such fears to discourage their victims from coming forward to seek help.

Sadly, in some cases, the psychological impact can lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. This is why early intervention, education and frequent open conversations are crucial in protecting children and young people in these situations.

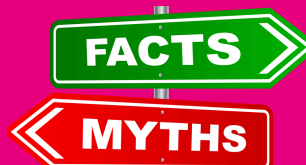


SCAN THE QR CODE OR CLICK THE INEQE LOGO IN THE TOP RIGHT CORNER FOR MORE INFORMATION

FACT CHECKING ONLINE RESOURCES

Do you know where your 'facts' are coming from? Misinformation, rumours and false claims can spread extremely quickly, therefore it is critical that we know how to separate fact from fiction.

Click the signpost image or scan the QR code for a guide on how to fact check your resources.



COMING IN THE NEXT EDITION:

- Essential KCSIE 2025 Updates
- Martyn's Law