

HOLYHEAD SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

January 2025

OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM



At Holyhead School we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We believe that all children should feel safe and be able to approach someone if they have a concern. The safety and wellbeing of our students is the most important aspect of our work as a school. If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing or safety, or want to report a concern about another child, please ask to speak to one of the Designated Safeguarding Team.

In this month's issue we look at:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Get AI-safe Online
- 5 tips for talking to your child about their safety and wellbeing
- How social media algorithms show violence to boys
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- INEQE WhatsApp group "Add Everyone" concern

The use of artificial intelligence is growing significantly, the algorithms used in this software learn to recognise and respond to its users preferences. Recent research shows boys are more likely to be the victim of social media algorithms that highlight violence and misogynistic content. This material is highly dangerous to the safety and wellbeing of not only boys but young people in general. If you have a concern about a student at Holyhead please call us on 0121 523 1960 or email our lead DSL Mrs Denny on ddenny@holyhead.crst.org.uk

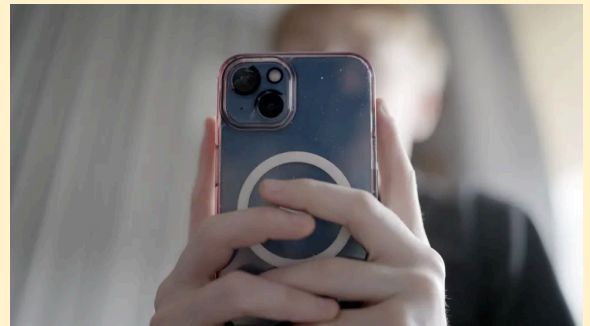
How social media algorithms show violence to boys

According to recent research by the BBC, boys are more likely to be the target of social media algorithms that highlight violence and misogynistic content.

It was 2022 and Cai, then 16, was scrolling on his phone. He says one of the first videos he saw on his social media feeds was of a cute dog. But then, it all took a turn.

He says “out of nowhere” he was recommended videos of someone being hit by a car, a monologue from an influencer sharing misogynistic views, and clips of violent fights. He found himself asking - why me?

TikTok and other social media companies use AI tools to remove the vast majority of harmful content and to flag other content for review by human moderators, regardless of the number of views they have had. But the AI tools cannot identify everything



TikTok says 99% of content it removes for violating its rules is taken down by AI or human moderators before it reaches 10,000 views. It also says it undertakes proactive investigations on videos with fewer than this number of views.

Algorithms from all the major social media companies have been recommending harmful content to children, even if unintentionally, UK regulator Ofcom tells the BBC.

Cai told the BBC he tried to use one of Instagram’s tools and a similar one on TikTok to say he was not interested in violent or misogynistic content - but he says he continued to recommend it.

He is interested in UFC - the Ultimate Fighting Championship. He also found himself watching videos from controversial influencers when they were sent his way, but he says he did not want to be recommended for this more extreme content.

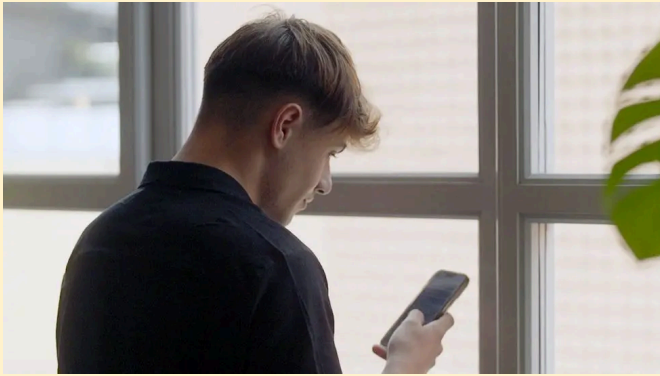
“You get the picture in your head and you can’t get it out. [It] stains your brain. And so you think about it for the rest of the day,” he says.

Girls he knows who are the same age have been recommended videos about topics such as music and make-up rather than violence, he says.

Meanwhile Cai, now 18, says he is still being pushed to violent and misogynistic content on both Instagram and TikTok.

When we scroll through his Instagram Reels, they include an image making light of domestic violence. It shows two characters side by side, one of whom has bruises, with the caption: “My Love Language”. Another shows a person being run over by a lorry.

Cai says he has noticed that videos with millions of likes can be persuasive to other young men his age.



For example, he says one of his friends became drawn into content from a controversial influencer - and started to adopt misogynistic views.

His friend “took it too far”, Cai says. “He started saying things about women. It’s like you have to give your friend a reality check.”

Cai says he has commented on posts to say that he doesn’t like them, and when he has accidentally liked videos, he has tried to undo them, hoping it will reset the algorithms. But he says he has ended up with more

videos taking over his feeds.

So, how do TikTok’s algorithms actually work?

According to Andrew Kaung, the algorithms' fuel is engagement, regardless of whether the engagement is positive or negative. That could explain in part why Cai’s efforts to manipulate the algorithms weren’t working.

The first step for users is to specify some likes and interests when they sign up. Andrew says some of the content initially served up by the algorithms to, say, a 16-year-old, is based on the preferences they give and the preferences of other users of a similar age in a similar location.

According to TikTok, the algorithms are not informed by a user’s gender. But Andrew says the interests teenagers express when they sign up often have the effect of dividing them up along gender line

You can read more about this by clicking the link <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gdqzxydpzo>

Get AI-safe Online

AI is fast becoming the latest hurdle in technology. Once upon a time that issue was bandwidth speeds, which when conquered, produced the age of smartphones and social media in which we live today. Currently artificial intelligence is rather primitive, essentially formed of complex algorithms dressed up as something else by marketeers. We are not approaching the feared 'singularity' any time soon. However, these systems touted as AI are getting exponentially more sophisticated. They are already capable of imitating voices, human bodies, human faces and human movement, to the level that other machines can be convinced by them. Unscrupulous actors have quickly jumped on these developments, and now present new threats. Propaganda, gaining access to secure systems, auto generation of exam answers and more look to endanger the functioning of any institution. Educational institutions are no exception, that is why it is vital to be up to date on the developments in this sphere.

Deep Fake Nude Technology - WhiteHatter

Deep Fakes are a form of pornographic production that is now a few years old. However, its entry into the mainstream has been rather recent. Powered by what is termed 'AI', these programmes use machine learning to generate high definition explicit images of individuals from innocent photographs. This presents a danger to staff and pupils alike. Whether they're made by pupils or by individuals spying on the school building, the perilous nature of the technology is undeniable. The Canadian online safety specialist, WhiteHatter, has published an article examining this emerging technology.

It is an indispensable read for those interested in new threats to school security. If interested please follow the link below:

<https://thewhitehatter.ca/blog/deepfake-nude-technology-in-schools-the-growing-threat-to-a-students-and-teachers-emotional-psychological-physical-safety-wellbeing/>

INEQE safeguarding group - "Add Everyone" WhatsApp warning



Recent concerns have emerged regarding a WhatsApp group known as 'Add Everyone.' Schools and regional police forces across the UK have warned that this group exposes children and young people to explicit and harmful material.

Imagine a room filled with children and adults where images, videos and other information are displayed on a screen for all to see. You're probably picturing a concert, a cinema or some other happy family occasion. But what if the adults in the room are those with ill intentions? What if these adults could interact with the children and encourage them to bring other young people to the room? In this room, the imagery on the screen is sexually explicit, violent, and illegal material that's highly inappropriate for children. Sadly, this nightmarish scenario is reportedly happening on WhatsApp through the use of 'Add Everyone' group chats

"Add Everyone" group chats can go by many names, but their purpose is often the same. These WhatsApp groups are spaces where children and young people are invited to join a chat that contains content such as sexual images, material promoting self-harm, sexual violence, racism and other inappropriate content. These chats may be created by adults seeking to connect with younger users or by young people themselves as a seemingly fun activity. However, as the name suggests, it is difficult to control who becomes a member of these groups, which means that access to children and young people can easily fall into the wrong hands. In some cases, the group owners ask for children to add their contacts to the group, 'except their parents'.

As WhatsApp has lowered its minimum age from 16 to 13 this year, the risk of young users encountering inappropriate content and adults may increase. However, reports indicate that these groups have targeted children as young as 9.

Children and young people might be drawn to such groups out of curiosity or a desire for social connection. The allure of being part of a larger community can overshadow the potential dangers.

Unfortunately, these groups often exploit this curiosity, presenting harmful content and access to strangers as if it were normal or acceptable.

With 8 in 10 young people using WhatsApp by the time they have reached 16-17 years old, many potential victims are already on the platform. Additionally, WhatsApp's end-to-end encryption (E2EE) makes it particularly appealing for sharing inappropriate content. While these groups can exist on any social platform, this encryption ensures that only the sender and recipient can read messages—neither WhatsApp itself nor the police can access them. This means that inappropriate content shared within groups can be difficult to monitor and is only seen by authorities if a device is seized during a police investigation.

Many of us routinely use WhatsApp to connect with our friends and families, which can build a false sense of security that this is a normal app where nothing can go wrong. However, all technology is influenced by the people who use or abuse it. These groups can present a number of risks to the children and young people who are invited to join, such as:

- Inappropriate content - Exposure to child sexual abuse material, adult pornography, or other 'lawful but awful' content. This exposure can be distressing and poses additional risks if a young person saves or downloads such content to their device or forwards it to others.
- Sharing personal information - Young people are often encouraged to share their own or others' personal details. This may be done to gain access to more young users or to misuse a child's personal or private information for blackmail, extortion or manipulation.
- Access to children - Joining these groups allows other users to view members' profile photos and contact numbers. This information can facilitate the contact and exploitation of young people by predators.
- Hate disguised as humour - We can all be drawn in by memes and jokes, especially when they are presented in a humorous way. However, sharing misogynistic, harmful, or illegal content through WhatsApp can have serious repercussions and can be traced back to everyone who has had contact with it.

Next Steps and Further Advice

To protect the children in your care, consider these steps:

- Encourage open communication - Discussing online safety with young people doesn't have to feel like a chore. Approach the topic with curiosity and openness, and have regular conversations about what you hear in the news or what their friends are doing online. This can create a comfortable space for them to share, often making it easier for young people to open up about their own situations and enable you to encourage critical thinking.
- Set privacy settings - Work with your child to set privacy settings that ensure only their contacts can add them to groups and view their information. Remind them that friends can still add them to group chats, so discuss how to handle invitations they receive.
- Adjust auto saving settings - WhatsApp can automatically save images to the user's camera roll unless adjusted in the settings. This could lead to young people unintentionally storing harmful or illegal images sent in group chats.

- Screenshot, report and block - If a young person is added to an inappropriate group chat, take a screenshot of the evidence* and report it directly to the platform. Encourage them to block any concerning users and to speak to a trusted adult or an organisation like Childline on 0800 1111.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

The transition back to school after the winter break, especially for older students facing academic pressures, can be challenging. It's essential to monitor your child's mental health and well-being:

- Stress Management: Discuss strategies for managing stress, such as time management, prioritisation, and relaxation techniques. Encourage them to engage in hobbies and physical activities that they enjoy.
- Open Dialogue: Maintain an open line of communication. Encourage your child to share their feelings, whether they're excited, nervous, or stressed. Remind them that it's okay to seek help when needed.
- Peer Relationships: Older students often face complex social dynamics. Encourage your child to maintain positive relationships and seek support if they experience any form of peer pressure or bullying.
- Mental Health Support: Our counsellor and pastoral team are available to support students with any mental health concerns.

For additional resources, consider exploring [YoungMinds](#) or [Mind](#).

At Holyhead school we have a dedicated mental health team that can support your child, for more information contact the school 0121 523 1960 or email our mental health lead Mrs Williams wiliams@holyhead.crst.org.uk

5 tips for talking to your child about their safety and wellbeing



**Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.**

Having positive conversations with your children to discuss worries or concerns or even just checking in with them about their life and their feelings is very important to helping them to feel supported and keeping them safe.

Here are some tips from the experts at Barnardos who work with children and young people to help you get talking.

1. Be interested in their lives

Children who know that there is nothing too big or too small that they can talk to you about are much more likely to speak up when things feel wrong or unsafe. Children and young people need to trust and feel supported by the adults around them.

You can help build this by showing regular interest in their day, asking them about their lives and what's happening in it, so they know that you care. Celebrate their successes and offer support when things are not going so well.

This can help your children to know that they can speak to you, or another adult they trust, about any worries that they may have. This can also help you to notice any changes in behaviour that could suggest something is happening in their lives that needs attention.

2. Try to make talking about feelings and safety normal

Try to talk about feelings as a regular part of your family life. There are simple ways to help you and your child talk about feelings on a day-to-day basis. For instance, you can try making it part of your routine to check in with how your child is feeling at the start and end of the day. Talking to your child about how your day has been, what kind of things make you feel happy or sad or frustrated can also help your child understand their own feelings and what might affect them. You could speak to them, in an age-appropriate way, about what it means to feel safe and what to do if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable about someone else's behaviour. Understanding what it means to feel safe will help children, especially younger ones, to be able to identify when they don't feel safe and what to do about it.

Make sure they know how to contact you in an emergency and who else they could contact. Talk to them about how they can support their friends and what support they should expect from their friends, too.

It's important to talk to them about their apps and games on their devices and exploring the safety features together. Read our guide to online life for more information.

3. Be open about your concerns

You might have noticed something that could be a sign of something serious happening to your child, or you might just have a feeling that something isn't right. You know your child best. If you feel like something is wrong, talk to your child about it. Try to be up front about your worries, and discuss the things you've noticed or are concerned about, whilst making sure your child feels safe enough to talk.

Be aware that your child may already be feeling embarrassed or ashamed, so try to discuss your worries without judgement and reassure them that you're always there to talk to. Spend a bit of time planning where and when to have this conversation. Consider how you and your child might be feeling and ensure you have enough time to talk and that your child is in a place they feel safe.

4. Take a breath before reacting

If your child tells you about something that worries or angers you, try to remain calm. Let them talk at their own pace and try not to interrupt. Your first instinct might be to react to the information you have been given by taking away phones, stopping them from seeing certain friends or grounding them. While understandably this comes from a desire to keep them safe, your child might see this as a punishment for speaking openly or think that what's happened to them is their fault. This can result in anger and mistrust, or shame, and prevent the child from voicing concerns to you in the future.

5. Reach out to others

If you're worried, know that you aren't alone. Talk to other adults that your child has a good relationship with - perhaps a teacher, a family member, a youth worker or friend - and express your concerns to see if there's anything that they might be able to do to support you. If your child does talk about an abusive, harmful or dangerous experience, remember that you can access help. The police and social care have specialist officers who can help children and families and can help to make children safe.

More information can be found by visiting the [Barnardo's website 5 tips for talking to your child about their safety and wellbeing | Barnardo's](#)