

HOLYHEAD SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

February 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
- Talking to your child about online wellbeing
- New Technology
- It's easy to lie about our age
- Safer Internet Day 2025
- Positively online
- Ultra-violence on your smartphones: How to protect your children?
- How to respond to cyberbullying

Safer Internet Day 2025 will take place on the 11th of February 2025, with celebrations and learning based activities around the theme '**Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online**'. This month's newsletter will focus on supporting families and children around staying safe whilst online.

Safer Internet Day 2025

**Safer
Internet
Day 2025** | **Tuesday**
11 February

Coordinated by the UK Safer Internet Centre

saferinternetday.org.uk

Safer Internet Day 2025 will take place on the 11th of February 2025, with celebrations and learning based around the theme '**Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online**'

Safer Internet Day is the UK's biggest celebration of online safety. Each year we cover an online issue or theme that speaks about the things young people are seeing and experiencing online. Created in consultation with young people across the UK, this year Safer Internet Day will be

focusing on the issue of scams online and for young people, how to protect themselves and others, as well as what support is available to them.

This Safer Internet Day we will assess the real scale of this issue and allow young people to share their experiences and ideas on how to tackle the problem. We'll build on the important work being done to raise awareness of issues such as online financial sextortion and we'll also consider the future of scams, answering questions such as:

- How is changing technology like generative AI going to impact the approach of scammers?
- What role can the government and internet industry take to tackle this threat?
- And what changes would young people like to see to help protect themselves moving forward?

Coordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, the celebration sees thousands of organisations get involved to promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital technology for children and young people

About Safer Internet Day

Over the years, **Safer Internet Day** has become a landmark event in the online safety calendar. Starting as an initiative of the EU SafeBorders project in 2004 and taken up by the Insafe network as one of its earliest actions in 2005, Safer Internet Day has grown beyond its traditional geographic zone and is now celebrated in approximately 170 countries worldwide.

[Safer Internet Day 2025 - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Positively online

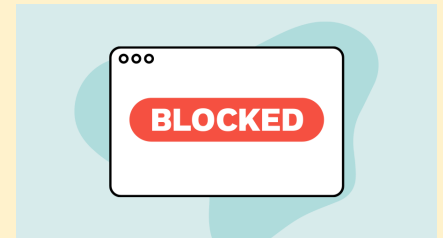
The NSPCC have published six tips to help you improve your family's online wellbeing. They also provide you with a guide on how to talk to your child about what they are doing online as well as a quiz that you can play together [Positively online: top tips for online wellbeing | NSPCC](#)

Six tips to improve your family's online wellbeing

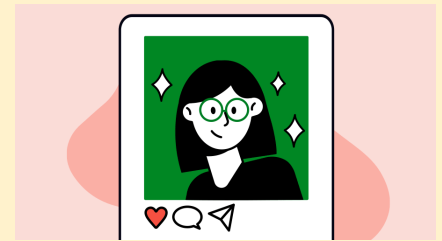
1. **Screen-time savvy** - Spending less time on screens is a great way to improve wellbeing both online and offline. Try setting some limits and boundaries surrounding screens and make use of the wellbeing settings on apps such as Instagram and TikTok, or on your devices.



2. **Navigate the negative** - Children can see things online that make them feel upset, angry, or cause low self-esteem. If this happens, encourage them to mute or block accounts that do this. They can also use settings that block words, phrases, or posts they don't want to see. Encourage them to make their online space a positive one!



3. **Seeing isn't believing** - Remind your child that not everything they see or hear online is true. Encourage them to regularly question what they're viewing. This includes content that might be making them feel bad about themselves, or like they're missing out. If this does happen, you could talk to your child about filters, edited images or the fact that people usually post about the best bits of their lives rather than the boring, everyday bits



4. **Mistakes happen** - If your child makes a mistake online, such as getting into an argument or sharing personal information, be understanding. You could use this mistake as a learning opportunity! This is a part of building digital resilience, which will help you all feel better about being online.



5. **Take the lead** - Your children look to you as an example. Make sure you're acting on your own online wellbeing advice – doing things like taking breaks and not engaging with negative content.



6. **Get chatting** - Have regular chats with your child about what they like doing online and how it makes them feel. Don't forget to talk about the positives of being online as much as the negatives, and really listen to what they're telling you.



Talking to your child about online wellbeing

Navigating the fast changing online world can be challenging and sometimes parents can find it difficult to understand what their children are viewing online. Below are four steps you can take to begin talking to your child about online wellbeing.

1. Consider your approach

You know your child best, so use this knowledge to help you choose which approach to take. Ensure your child has the time and space to think about what is being discussed, and allow them to talk without blame, judgement, or interruption. Pick an environment where they feel comfortable and a moment when they are relaxed – this will help them to stay calm and make it easier for them to listen and talk openly.

2. Ask open questions

Starting a conversation with 'what do you enjoy about that game?' or 'how does that activity make you feel?' will allow your child to feel comfortable to talk openly with you and share their true feelings.

3. Let them guide you

If your child talks about something that you don't understand or that concerns you, ask them to show you or give you more detail. Listen carefully to your child and reassure them. Tell them that you want to help and work with them to make sure they feel safe and supported.

4. See things from their point of view

Try to not be dismissive of how your child spends time online, as this may shut down the conversation. Remember, children's online lives are not the same as those of adults. They use the internet in very different ways. Showing that you understand the importance of your child's time online can help with more difficult conversations.

It's easy to lie about our age

22% of 8 to 17-year-olds lie about their age and pretend to be adults when creating social media profiles, a survey from Ofcom has found. While some social media platforms, such as Instagram, are starting to roll out age verification tools, it is currently still very easy for children to pretend to be adults to avoid any privacy settings designed for children and teenagers.

Ofcom has warned social media companies they will be punished if they fail to take significant extra steps to address the problem of children pretending to be adults online.

This is despite the Online Safety Act (OSA) requiring platforms to beef-up age verification, a responsibility that will come into force in 2025. It said children being able to pass for adults increased their risk of being exposed to harmful content.

"Platforms need to do much, much more to know the age of their children online," Ian McCrae, Director of Market Intelligence at Ofcom told the BBC.

'So easy to lie'

A number of tech firms have recently announced measures to make social media safer for young people, such as **Instagram launching "teen accounts."** However, when BBC news spoke to a group of teenagers at Rosshall Academy, in Glasgow, all of them said they used adult ages for their social media accounts

"It's just so easy to lie about your age", said Myley, 15.

"I put in my actual birthday - like day and month - but when it gets to the year, I'll just scroll ten years back," she added.

"There's no verification, they don't ask for ID, they don't ask for anything," added another pupil, Haniya, who is also 15.

BBC News was also unchallenged when it set up accounts, using newly created email addresses, on a number of major platforms. A user age over 18 was entered without any proof being requested.

Age assurance

There is deep public concern about children being exposed to harmful content online, driven in part by the high-profile deaths of teenagers Molly Russell and Brianna Ghey. It led the last government to pass the Online Safety Act which, from July 2025, will require social media platforms to implement what Ofcom calls "highly effective age assurance." It has not specified what tech should be used to strengthen the verification process, but said it was testing several systems in its own laboratories and would have "more to say" in the new year.

The Molly Rose Foundation - set up in Molly Russell's memory - described the figures as "incredibly shocking", saying they showed how easy it was to get around current age checks online.

"This means that many children will not be protected from harmful suicide and self-harm content when regulation comes in because tech companies are failing to enforce their own rules," said chief executive Andy Burrows.

The BBC approached the most popular platforms for children and young people in the UK for their responses.

"Every day we remove thousands of suspected underage accounts," TikTok said in a statement.

"We're exploring how new machine learning technology can enhance these efforts and co-leading an initiative to develop industry-wide age assurance approaches that prioritise safety and respect young people's rights," it added.

Both Snapchat and Meta - owner of WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook - declined to make statements. X, formerly Twitter, did not reply to the BBC's request for comment.

The government has previously come under pressure to strengthen the Online Safety Act, with **some saying it does not go far enough**. On Thursday the Australian parliament passed a government law that would **ban social media for under-16s** - a move the technology secretary, Peter Kyle, has previously said he is **open to emulating**.

Ultra-violence on your smartphones: How to protect your children?



A concerning trend among school-age children is the exposure to ultra-violent scenes (torture, beheadings, war scenes) on their smartphones. Alarming, 25 percent of 11 to 18 year olds are engaging in this disturbing behaviour. These scenes, often shared on platforms like Reddit, Telegram, Discord, or even social networks like X (formerly Twitter), are part of a troubling challenge where young people test their limits by watching extremely traumatic images. These include footage of drug cartels torturing opponents, terrorists attacking, and torturers murdering convicts.

The Risks

Exposure to ultra-violent content can severely impact a child's emotional and psychological development, much like unprepared exposure to sexual or pornographic scenes. Such content can desensitise children to violence, leading to aggressive behaviours or emotional disturbances. While platforms claim to filter violent content, these measures are often insufficient.

Parental Actions

1. **Raise awareness and educate:** Talk to your child about the dangers of viewing violent content and encourage open communication. Let them know they can come to you if they encounter disturbing images.

2. **Be vigilant:** Watch for signs of trauma in your child, such as sleep disturbances, anxiety, or intense emotional reactions. These may indicate exposure to distressing content.
3. **Remember the law:** Teach your child that sharing violent content is illegal and that they should report such material when encountered. Reporting helps make the internet safer for everyone.
4. **Filter offensive content:** Use parental controls on social networks and connected devices to block violent content. Tools like Google Family Link on Android or Apple's Parental Controls can help manage app access, website categories, and screen time limits.
5. **Encourage assertiveness:** Teach your child to say 'no' to peer pressure. Helping them develop this skill early will enable them to navigate online spaces more responsibly and maintain their physical and psychological well-being.

By taking these steps, parents and caregivers can better protect their children from the harmful effects of ultra-violence on smartphones and promote a safer, healthier digital environment.

New Technology

With children constantly accessing and receiving new technology or related games, here is a reminder of the importance of setting up appropriate parental controls.



Games/Consoles

- Check age ratings: look at the PEGI rating of any new games.
- Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check to see if it has any communication elements.
- If a game does allow your child to communicate with others, then adjust or disable the settings as appropriate to your child. - On the device itself, set up applicable controls such as restricting spending limits and managing who they can communicate with.

Follow the links below to find out how to set up Parental Controls for some devices here:

- Xbox: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub>
- PS5: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parentalcontrols-spending-limits/>
- Nintendo Switch
<https://www.nintendo.co.uk/Hardware/NintendoSwitch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-1183145.html>

Tablets/Smart phones

Set up parental controls on the device to prevent purchases, restrict content viewed and adjust privacy settings. Furthermore, remember to check any apps your child requests to check that they are suitable for their age.

Follow the links below to find out more:

- iPhones/iPad: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121>
- Android Device: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738>

Why is it important? Parental controls are important to help provide a safer experience for your child by reducing/preventing access to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, communication with strangers and restricting purchases.

Further information You can find out more about parental controls here:
<https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/parental-controls/>

Tips on how to respond to cyberbullying



Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
- Email
- Online gaming communities

Report Cyberbullying

When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behavior so it can be addressed

Steps to Take Immediately

- Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers and social media sites.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.

- Get support from someone that you trust

Report Cyberbullying to Online Service Providers

Cyberbullying often violates the terms of service established by social media sites and internet service providers. Review their terms and conditions or rights and responsibilities sections. These describe content that is or is not appropriate.

- Visit social media safety centers to learn how to block users and change settings to control who can contact you.
- Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service.

Can I talk to the Police?

Most bullying isn't against the law, but you may be able to talk to the police if someone commits a crime against you, including:

- being violent or physically assaulting you
- sexually assaulting you
- stealing things from you
- bullying you because of your race, gender or sexual identity, or if you have a disability, this is hate crime
- sharing or threatening to share a naked image of you without your permission.

Report Cyberbullying to Schools

Cyberbullying can create a disruptive environment at school and is often related to in-person bullying. The school can use the information to help inform prevention and response strategies.

At Holyhead School we do not accept any forms of bullying and/or intimidation. If you are concerned for the wellbeing of a child please contact a DSL on either 0121 523 1960 or via the school website. You can also contact the Lead DSL Mrs Denny directly ddenny@holyhead.crst.org.uk