

WELCOME TO OUR PARENT SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

MEET THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM



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DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Many parents may be concerned that their child might experiment with alcohol or drugs as they grow up.

It is important to make sure that children are aware of the risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Even young children might have questions and it's better to talk to them earlier rather than later about the consequences of drinking or taking drugs.

Alcohol

It is very likely that a child or young person will be offered alcohol at some point. It is important for parents and carers to be open and talk to their children about the risks of drinking. Find out what they know and make sure they know [the laws on alcohol for under 18s](#).

The NSPCC suggests having 'a few brief conversations over time' and trying 'not to lecture your child'. The charity offers excellent advice about how to [talk to your child about drugs or alcohol](#).

It is also paramount to talk to children about how to drink safely if they choose to when they are legally old enough. [The Drinkaware Trust](#) has advice about [staying safe while drinking](#).

Childline also offers lots of support and guidance aimed at children and young people about [alcohol](#), especially about what to do if they are feeling [pressured by friends](#) to start drinking.

Drugs

Children are less likely to take drugs than drink alcohol, but it is still vital to talk to them about the risks.

It can be a difficult topic to bring up with a child or young person. The [NSPCC](#) advises parents to have 'brief, open and relaxed conversations' and to use cues, such as drug issues happening in TV shows or in the media to start a conversation about drugs.

The Frank website is an excellent resource for information about drugs, which includes a [glossary of slang terms](#) and [advice for worried parents](#).

Frank says that it is important for parents and carers to remember that:

- for most young people illegal drug taking is not a part of normal life.
- most people who do try drugs do not continue using them.



EXPLICIT IMAGES TREND ON TIKTOK

What is this new viral challenge? There is a very worrying new viral challenge circulating on TikTok using variations of the hashtag 'foopah'. This is a play on the phrase 'faux pas' (an embarrassing public act), the trend encourages users to upload 'blink and you'll miss it' nudity. This aims to get around the platform's detection and moderation by being hidden in plain sight. Using screens, mirrors and other reflective surfaces are just some of the ways people have taken part in the challenge.

The content itself ranges from those who are sharing more obvious sexually explicit content to suggestive but subtle imagery of themselves. The trend also creates an allure for young people who are taking to various platforms to 'react' to the challenge or discuss it with others online.

The challenge originated from one TikTok user as a way of promoting her Only Fans account. Her initial video, which included the subtle flashing of her breasts gathered 2 million views in 24 hours! As with most inappropriate or banned hashtags, different variations in spelling tend to appear as the platform detects and removes it, prompting the creation of another, The #foopah hashtag was viewed more than 7 million times, but has since been removed. It was quickly replaced by #foopa which has now over 30 million views.

Clickbait

The content produced by the challenge ranges from subtle to explicit. Those who choose to engage in a more subtle or less inappropriate way, trivialise the risk presented by sharing explicit content in a public space online.

Thrill-seeking behaviours

The nature of this challenge is that it entices users to find new and creative ways of continuing to get around the platform's ability to detect and filter nudity. This can lead to a sense of achievement for successfully avoiding the platform's detection and moderation. For more information/safety advice click below <https://ineqe.com/2023/02/24/explicit-content-tiktok-trend>



HARMFUL ONLINE CONTENT

We are all to aware of the harmful or abusive behaviours that appear on social media. What can be hard to understand is the presence of popular personalities or influencers who become famous for showing this exact type of behaviour over online platforms. This is even more concerning when children and young people begin to view this harmful online content. There have been reports of children as young as 11 quoting online personality Andrew Tate at school, even resulting in acts of violence towards female peers.

Who is Andrew Tate?

Andrew Tate is an American-British former professional kickboxer turned internet personality. He is a self-described 'success coach' and has a subscription-based online marketing programme called 'Hustler's University' with over 1 million subscribers. He has recently hit the headlines adding to his notoriety due to a string of controversial comments and behaviours, such as:

- Claiming mental illness makes people 'weak' and the depression 'isn't real'.
- Promoting gendered violence and misogyny on his podcast and posts about relationships.

Despite his social media ban and arrest, incidents involving him in schools have shown a notable increase. This has led to a higher number of referrals being made to Prevent and incidents of verbal harassment of female teachers and pupils. Concerns are also growing about his influence on young men towards misogynistic extremism.

Why are children and young people interested in this behaviour?

- Glamorous lifestyle. Many of the influencers or personalities appear to be living a luxury lifestyle. They seem successful, inspiring and confident in what they believe in.
- Fast fame. The controversial nature of these behaviours seems to automatically propel unknown names into trending hashtags on social media platforms.
- Isolation and loneliness. Children and young people who feel isolated, rejected and ostracised are particularly vulnerable to this type of content.
- Looking for advice. A topic or insecurity that a young person needs help with could inspire them to begin vulnerably searching for an answer on social media.
- Keeping up with peers. Young people may seek out dangerous online personalities such as Andrew Tate to try and appear 'informed' amongst friends or older siblings.

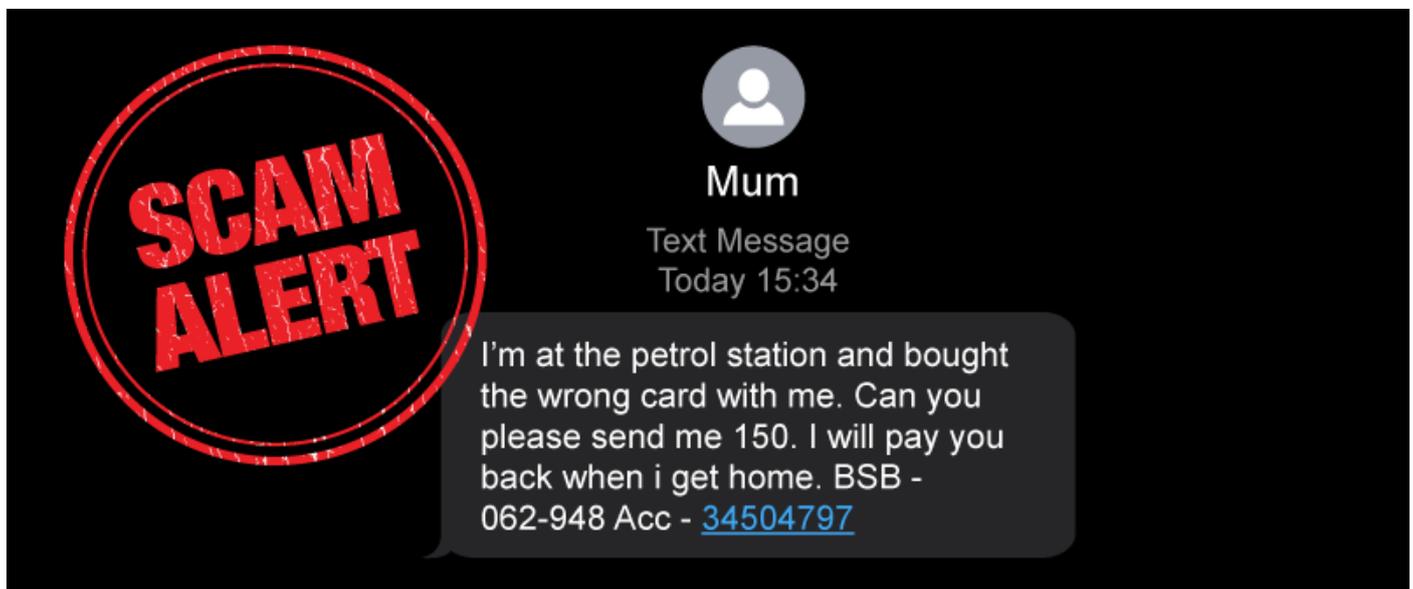
Potential risks

- Replicating or engaging in the behaviour in order to 'fit in' with peers.
- Low self-esteem when comparing themselves to 'successful' personalities.
- Being the victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying.
- Having an emotional reaction to harmful content online.
- Damage to their reputation that could impact relationships and future plans.
- Views and beliefs being negatively influenced or 'nudged' in the wrong direction.

"HI MUM" SCAM ALERT

We have recently been made aware of a phishing scam known as 'Hi Mum' that has been circulating through text messages or instant messaging services, such as WhatsApp. The scam involves the impersonation of friends or family members in order to gain access to your personal information. We strongly encourage you to read the article below for guidance on identifying phishing scams and how to deal with them if you have been targeted.

https://inege.com/2022/09/12/scam-alert/?utm_campaign=Slender%20Man&utm_medium=email&hsmi=225733939&hsenc=p2ANqtz-rUanehUHyXkPj2fldBDp9PN5mCSy-JQj95fGnMuknFCfIW2t1-kj7QN9SMN91E_OV5SessrfyOqROStiOw1a57MF8SqwKisLlt_awiMIPfd_b7M&utm_content=225733939&utm_source=hs_email



USEFUL INFORMATION

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and educators with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. Please visit nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

Part of our Gaming & Gambling Series

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What you need to know about... GAMING STREAMERS & INFLUENCERS

What are they?

'Gaming Streamers & Influencers'

Streamers are people who stream themselves gaming, drawing, making things etc. for people to watch on the internet. Usually this will be done live, and others are able to chat with them in real time while they do so. Influencers are social media stars who hold influence over the people that follow them, like a kind of trend-setter or taste-maker, who companies often pay to promote their products. A streamer could also be considered an influencer in their chosen area.

JADAGAMING

LIVE

Know the Risks

Adult Content

Many streamers use platforms such as Twitch or YouTube to broadcast themselves. YouTube for example, is only for ages 13+ (YouTube Kids is for under 13s) and may contain a lot of other adult content. Streamers themselves, may be unsuitable for younger audiences with the kind of content they make, and with many opting to stream live, anything can – and does – happen.

Authenticity Risk

A lot of streamers will have some kind of sponsorship deal in place with a company trying to sell their products to an audience. When the audience is mostly younger viewers, they may not realise that streamers are getting paid to promote a product and may not necessarily have their best interests in mind.

Bullying and hate

While some streamers do employ moderators to try and combat hateful comments or bullying in their comments sections, they can still be very hectic. Hateful language is quite common, and people looking to groom children or engage in online bullying behaviour, could frequent the live chats.

Subscriptions

Streamers also make money through subscriptions on websites like Twitch, where fans will donate them a small amount as little or as often as they like. Called 'bits', they can be bought in bundles of varying prices which can be gifted to streamers via 'cheers'. Children could buy these 'bits' in large amounts without realising what they're doing, leaving a big bill behind.

Safety Tips

Discuss what's real online

Be sure to teach kids the difference between what's real and honest, or fake and untrustworthy online. Photoshopping fake images and videos and bragging about themselves online is unfortunately quite commonplace so it is difficult to tell what is real or fake. People with large followings can be promoting unhealthy or unattainable lifestyles to children to boost their own online influence.

Use filters

There are filters that can be put in place to block out a lot of adult content on streaming sites. Just make sure you have access to children's accounts so you can set the parameters and keep track of what they're seeing yourself. Usually, parental controls will be located in the settings portion of an account's menu.

Check age settings

Both YouTube and Twitch states that they are not suitable for children under 13 years old, but other sites might be different. YouTube Kids, for example, is for ages 13 and under, and offers much of the same kid-friendly content that YouTube does without the risk of running into something improper.

Affiliate links

Keep an eye out for affiliate links in social media posts and tags like #ad. UK influencers have to follow the CAP Code for advertising standards, but many don't. It can be hard to tell who is working through legitimate channels because it's almost impossible to regulate. Many streamers encourage fans to buy merchandise through online shops and stores.

Action & Support

Name check streamers

If your child has begun showing an interest in a streamer or influencer, check their names on Google. Some popular streamers have been discovered flouting industry regulations and using their young audiences to enhance their personal wealth through scams whilst others may swear on streams or promote drinking, substance abuse or links to gambling sites they operate to their young audiences.

Talk to your child

Initiate an open dialogue with your child about the kind of content they're consuming online. Ask about their favourite streamers and whether they like their personalities or the games they play and the community they have. Also remind them about what they should and shouldn't be sharing about themselves online and that just because social media stars do it, it can also be damaging.

Block and report

If you suspect a streamer might be taking advantage of their audience, or worse grooming children in any way, and have irrefutable evidence, do not hesitate to block and report them. First, block your child from being able to view their content and alert other parents to your concerns. Go immediately to the police or local authorities with the evidence of what you've seen.

Our Expert
Mark Foster

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

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USEFUL INFORMATION

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

Social media influencers are people who have established credibility in a specific industry and have the power to influence other people's decisions. Most commonly associated with YouTube and Instagram, 'influencers' will usually have a large number of followers and be viewed as authentic by their audience. It is for this reason that many influencers are often paid by big companies to promote their products in the hope of persuading their followers to purchase those goods.



What parents need to know about SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO 'INFLUENCERS'



AN UNREALISTIC PERCEPTION OF BODY IMAGE

Some of the most popular social media influencers often depict themselves as having the 'perfect body' and are paid to promote items such as health supplements or swimwear, which young people believe can help them achieve the same look. What is not always realised is that these images can be edited or filtered and aren't always a true-life representation. Your child may feel like this is what they need to look like and in some cases become obsessed with their body image, which could contribute towards a lower self-esteem or even becoming depressed if they can't achieve the same look.



BECOMING UNREALISTIC ROLE MODELS

As children become more and more involved on social media and identify who their favourite people are to follow, they may come to see social media influencers as role models, particularly if they are attracted by the lifestyle they see online. This could lead them into developing potentially unrealistic expectations of life and in some cases, using their role models as an escape from reality, particularly if they feel like they're own life isn't very fulfilling.



ENCOURAGING BAD HABITS

Although many social media influencers will get paid to advertise brands and their products, they will also post their own material online too, usually depicting their daily life or an activity for example. This may have both desirable and undesirable consequences, with influencers able to inspire both good habits, such as healthy eating, exercise or kindness. However it may also encourage children to adopt bad habits, such as drinking, smoking, swearing or even criminal behaviour, particularly if these are seen to be endorsed by the influencer.



THE NEED TO HAVE EVERYTHING

Many social media influencers will take photos or videos of themselves wearing the latest fashion or jewellery which companies want them to promote. They may also be provided with the latest gadgets to promote or, if they are children, toys to play with in order to persuade their followers to purchase them. Many children will be keen to buy these items in order to keep up with the latest trends however if they get left behind, they could be made to feel inadequate or inferior to other children who do have them.



AUTHENTICITY OF ENDORSEMENTS

Social media influencers hold a lot of persuasion with their audience and are often looked up to by younger followers. Many children will see them as credible, authentic and trust what they see online. However, some influencers may not always believe in the product they are promoting and therefore can mislead their followers, abusing their level of confidence in them. Your child may therefore find themselves looking up to people who are disingenuous or who feign interest in activities that they themselves do not actually care about.



Safety Tips For Parents



FOLLOW WHO THEY FOLLOW

A good way to see first-hand who may be influencing your child is to create your own social media account and follow the same people they do. This will give you a strong indication of what is shaping how your child behaves, what they like and what they are taking an interest in.



TALK ABOUT ROLE MODELS

Role models can play an important part of your child's life, particularly outside of the home. Talk to your child about who they look up to and why. Remind them that not everybody online is who they seem to be and if you do have concerns that your child is being negatively influenced, work with them in finding more positive alternatives.

BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

It's important that your child is aware of how unrealistic perceptions of life can be depicted on social media and that it is easy to be deceived. Discuss with your child how images can be heavily edited, cropped or manipulated to create artificial scenarios and that often the lifestyle that people display on social media isn't always realistic or in fact the truth.



DISCUSS REALISTIC VS UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

If you notice your child has suddenly taken a strong interest in the way they look, or you find they are a lot more body conscious, then it's a good idea to speak to them about why they feel that way. If they seem unhappy, try to build their self-esteem by talking to them and listening to their concerns, helping to build their confidence through praise and positivity. Remind them that looks aren't everything and not everything they see online is actually a true depiction of real life.



ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT THINKING

Social media influencers can be quite powerful individuals who hold a lot of persuasive power so it's important to encourage your child to think independently about everything they see and engage with online. Talk to them about the dangers of blindly following others and in keeping an open mind when viewing content. Teach them to always question people's motives online, especially when they see individuals are promoting a brand or product which they are likely to have been paid to advertise but may not necessarily personally endorse.



Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

