

WELCOME TO OUR PARENT SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

MEET THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM



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YOUTH VAPING - THE RISING TREND

Vaping appears to be everywhere nowadays. It seems you can't walk anywhere without seeing colourful advertising or catching a sickly-sweet smell in the air. While vapes (e-cigarettes) are meant to be used as a 'quit-tool' for smokers rather than a new method for non-smokers, one trend has been slowly on the rise in the last few years – youth vaping. Ineqe have received reports across their Safer Schools community that children as young as 8 years old have been found vaping at schools across the UK. It also follows concerns from healthcare officials that youth vaping is gradually on the rise in the UK, despite selling vapes to under 18s is illegal. Online safety experts have taken a more in depth look at youth vaping and you can find more information on the potential risks and helpful tips that will help you to better understand the issue and how it might impact the young people in your care.



Vaping Fast Facts

- Vapes come in many shapes and sizes. Some might look like everyday items such as pens or flash drives or even hoody drawstrings!
- These 'e-cigarettes' use a heated metal coil within a covering to create inhalable vapour from a liquid form of nicotine called 'e-liquid'.
- E-liquid ('e-juice' or 'vape juice') is a formula composed of nicotine and other chemical ingredients.
- The UK government has recently called for evidence into youth vaping.

Red flags

Vaping can be a lot more discrete than smoking, and may be happening without a parent, carer, or teacher noticing it. There are various signs to be aware of with youth vaping, such as:

- An unexplained cough, wheeze, or shortness of breath.
- Empty disposable vapes, plastic cartridges, containers, or bottles.
- Irritable behaviour if unable to go outside or have a break.
- Sudden mood swings, frustrations, paranoia, or anxiety.
- Lingering scents that are fruity or sweet smelling

WARNING - TREND ON TIKTOK 'PAIN IS AN ILLUSION'

We want to make you aware of a new TikTok trend that is currently circulating on the social media app. It is called 'Pain is an Illusion' – the trend encourages people to punch walls and doors which may cause injuries to participants. The idea is that you inflict pain upon yourself by punching hard surfaces, the aim being that you show no sign of pain!

How safe is TikTok?

Using any social network can be risky, but it's possible for young people to safely use the app with adult supervision (and a private account).

TikTok has different rules for different ages:

- Users under the age of 13 can't post videos or comment, and content is curated for a younger audience.
- For age 13 to 15, accounts are private by default. Only friends can comment on videos, and other users can't duet with your videos.
- Only users aged 16 and over can livestream and use direct messaging, and only users over 18 can buy, send, or receive virtual gifts. In March 2023, TikTok announced a time limit of 60 minutes/day on users under 18, requiring a password to be entered for further access to the platform.

What you can do

- Use the platform yourself to get an idea of how it works.
- If a child in your care uses the platform, try using it together and have an open conversation about the content you see.
- Talk to young people about what they can do if they see anything distressing online.
- Use TikTok's safety features to limit the way a young person interacts with the app. TikTok also offers some tools for parents and caregivers to further limit how much time kids spend on the app and what they can see.

Parents and guardians can also use Restricted Mode to reduce mature content, or Family Safety Mode to pair their account with their child's account to control settings completely.



AGE RESTRICTION GUIDANCE

With the ever-increasing number of social media apps available and trending, it is important to remember that they DO HAVE AGE RESTRICTIONS. As a parent/carer, it is your responsibility to be aware of the current age restrictions in place on the apps that your children are using. In school we are finding an increasing amount of time is spent dealing with social media issues that are happening out of school hours. Issues such as online bullying within group chats or inappropriate pictures being sent/shared with the sole aim of causing hurt. A reminder that the age restriction for apps such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and TikTok is age 13+, yet we are dealing with issues from Year 7 and upwards. We ask that you are vigilant and continuously monitor your child's social media use and also the amount of screentime. Please see guides showing the current age restrictions for all the popular social media apps and gaming trends – remember, there is an age restriction for a reason.



PARENTAL ON-LINE SAFETY TIPS

With the technological advances that had to be made during the lockdown periods, learning from home was forced to be increased. This meant that young people were spending a lot more time online doing their schoolwork, gaming, and socialising. However, it's important we all consider how we can help keep young people safer online. Here's some information about what your child may enjoy online and what you can do to help keep them safer!

Online gaming

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play.

For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect your child, watch this short video:

[In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers](#)

Sharing images and videos

Young people often share images or 'selfies' and there is potential for some of those to be nude or nearly nude images. Young people share 'nudes' for a number of different reasons, and some situations are riskier than others.

For information about the contexts in which images are shared and how best to respond, take a look at [nude selfies: a parent's guide](#).

More information?

Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency's Child Protection Command CEOP (NCA-CEOP). Their aim is to protect children and young people from sexual abuse online.

For more information, advice and guidance, visit their [parents website](#) and download their [home activity worksheets](#) for fun, online safety activities to do with your family.

Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online

Have an ongoing conversation: Continue to talk about the apps, games and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report.

For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

Make sure they know where to go for support: Remind your child they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. Remind them that they won't be in trouble and that you are there to help. For a breakdown of report services, visit:

[Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)

Make sure they know about NCA CEOP: Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.

CHILDNET – SEND CHILDREN

There are relatively few resources to help children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Childnet has created a set of free, adaptable resources that cover the important topics of healthy relationships, digital wellbeing and online pornography and are designed to equip and enable parents and carers, to support young people aged 11 and over with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Please click here for more information <https://www.childnet.com/resources/parent-and-carer-toolkit/>

