



Safeguarding Newsletter

ADVICE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

Welcome to the first edition of our Parent Safeguarding Newsletter from the William Edwards Safeguarding Team. We aim to bring you all the latest, relevant help and advice on issues we feel may be of importance to you and your child.

WES Safeguarding Team

As you may be aware, we've recently had some changes to our team, therefore we would like to take a minute to introduce ourselves.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Ms Wood

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Miss Pooley

Other members of the Safeguarding team include;

Mrs Cormack, Mr Greenwood, Mrs Heighway, Mr O'kill, Mr Pavitt & Mrs Taylor.

Rise in Teenage Vaping

Vaping among secondary-school children has seen a sharp increase with an NHS survey reporting that nearly one in ten teens are using e-cigarettes.

Children are being targeted by e-cigarette companies with bright packaging, exotic flavours, and attractive sounding names.

Online Challenges

We are hearing more and more reports of online challenges popping up on social media platforms. While not all pose potential risk, it is important as a parent/carer and guardian to know how to handle an online challenge you may be concerned about.

What are Online Challenges?

Online challenges are social media trends where people take part in or games, activities or dares. They typically originate on social media platforms e.g TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and more recently, Roblox, before spreading to other platforms.

Advice for parents

Talking to your child about online challenges can seem daunting, especially if they don't come to you on their own. Having an honest conversation with your child about their online habits is the best way to clear up confusions.



The latest online challenge that we have been made aware of is on the platform Roblox and is called 'The Game'. Online reports suggest that this viral challenge is an alleged self-harm 'game', shared via word documents in group chats.

Safer Schools gives the following advice to parents and carers ; Discuss online behaviour and harmful content with your child. Do not directly reference 'The Game' unless your child mentions it, this could encourage them to seek it out. Remind them about online safety, not sharing personal details and reporting any harmful content to a trusted adult.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

ROBLOX

Roblox is one of the most popular video games on the market. By 2020, the game's makers were claiming that more than half of children in the USA play it. As a 'sandbox' title, Roblox offers a huge amount of creative freedom: it lets players create their own gaming experiences with the Roblox Studio to build custom levels and games, which can then be shared with other players online. Roblox fosters creative thinking and enjoys a robust online community of fans.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Roblox encourages players to communicate online (including a group chat facility). This could expose children to risks such as scammers, online predators, harassment, griefers and more. The in-game chat has some filters, but isn't perfect: players can still send harmful messages to others – such as general hostility – while predators can reach out to children directly.

PUBLIC SERVERS

Roblox has private or VIP servers which allow people to play exclusively with their friends, but this costs money. Most Roblox players will instead be on public servers that anyone can join. Servers can host games which focus on all kinds of aspects, including direct player interaction. Some games and servers, therefore, will put children more at risk of contact from strangers than others.

ONLINE DATERS

These are also called 'ODers' and are quite common in Roblox. An ODER is an individual who joins a game with the intention of finding someone to date online – and eventually meet in person. Such online dating is against the Roblox community guidelines, but this usually doesn't deter ODERs. Some player-built Roblox game worlds have even been designed with online dating specifically in mind.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Roblox is actually free to download and play, but bear in mind that there are some hidden costs. Players are encouraged to make purchases in the game, for example, using real money. People can also buy extra Robux (the in-game currency) to spend on cosmetic items in the game, and some private or VIP servers also have a cost.

Advice for Parents & Carers

SET PARENTAL CONTROLS

Roblox comes with several parental control options, which are explained well on the game's official website. It's essential to enter the correct date of birth for your child, as that allows Roblox to automatically apply the appropriate chat filters. The game also allows parents and carers to set monthly spending restrictions and monitor their child's account.

DISABLE PRIVATE MESSAGING

Roblox's private messaging function raises the risk of children being contacted by people they may not want to speak with – potentially leading to bullying, harassment, toxicity and scam attempts. The game allows you to disable messages from anyone who hasn't been added as a friend on your child's account.

PRIVATE SERVERS

If your child has some genuine friends to play Roblox online with, paying for a private or VIP server decreases the risk of contact from strangers. Even then, however, some players could invite other people – who might not necessarily be child friendly – into the private server. If your child is a Roblox fan, it's important to talk with them regularly about who they are playing the game with.

MONITOR SPENDING

If they don't understand they're using real money, it's easy for children to accidentally spend a sizeable amount in the game. Using parental controls to place limits on their spending will help avoid any nasty financial surprises. Ensuring that you have two-factor authentication on your payment accounts also makes it harder for your child to spend money inadvertently.

DEALING WITH STRANGERS

At some point in their development, your child will need to learn how to deal with strangers online. Show them how to block and report any users who are upsetting them or asking uncomfortable questions. Talking to them about what's OK to discuss – and what they should never tell a stranger online – will help them understand how to communicate with other people online safely.

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



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