

# Holmer C. E. Academy—Safeguarding Newsletter

Issue 1 - September 2023



The Safeguarding team. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare or safety, please speak to a member of the schools safe-guarding team



Jayne Maund Designated Safeguard Lead



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Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to the first edition of our parent safeguarding newsletter. This newsletter is designed to support parents in deepening their understanding of topical safeguarding issues that may affect their child, themselves or members of their local community.

Safeguarding children is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every single person who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

You will see on the right of this page information about who to speak to if you have concerns about a child's safety or welfare, however all our staff are trained in safeguarding if you want to discuss any concerns with them.

I will attach to each newsletter a parent information sheet about keeping children safe online. Please take the time to read these as they will help you to help your children stay safe online.

Any questions, please do ask.

Jayne Maund

Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead

## Spotlight on: County lines and CCE

County lines is when gangs and organised crime groups exploit children to transport and sell drugs, normally between big cities where the exploiters are based to smaller towns or cities, sometimes across county boundaries, also locally and within the county. The children have dedicated mobile phone 'lines' for taking orders for drugs; children are used as they are less likely to be stopped by police, allowing adult dealers to avoid the risk of arrest. County lines is a form of criminal exploitation; this occurs where a person or a group of people takes advantage of their contact with and influence over a young person to coerce or manipulate them into carrying out a criminal act. Children as young as 6 are known to have been targeted by gangs for this purpose.

Young people may be recruited for county lines and other forms of criminal exploitation by a process of grooming: At the targeting stage, the exploiter befriends the young person and gains their trust. Young people may also be recruited through social media and/or through their peer group.

Some parents of young people who have been exploited through county lines involvement have reported that they went through a sudden change in behaviour. Possible indicators of involvement include:

- Unexplained money, clothes or gifts
- Frequent, unexplained phone calls
- New friendship circle that involves older children or adults
- Not attending school
- Carrying weapons

For more information on County lines and Child Criminal Exploitation please follow the link:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/county-lines>



### **Steps to take to help your child stay safe 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, follow the link: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/having-an-open-and-honest-conversation-about-online-safety-5-questions-for-parents>
- 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 at that you are there to help. For a breakdown of report services, visit: <https://www.internetmatters.org/report-issue/>

### **Useful online safety websites for parents:**

National Online Safety – safety guides on ALL aspects of internet use <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/>

Internet Matters – wide range of online safety advice for parents to keep their children safe on -line. <https://www.internetmatters.org/>

### **Useful contacts:**

[Young Minds](#): supporting children and young people's mental health

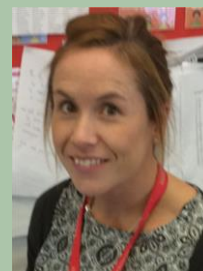
[Mind](#): adult mental health support and information

[Refuge](#): domestic abuse support

[Saneline](#): Emotional Support: 07984 967 708 (leave name and number and someone will call you back)



Zoe Jackson  
Deputy Safeguarding Lead



Katie Thomas  
Deputy Safeguarding Lead

**Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

To speak to the team - [\(01432\) 260800](tel:01432260800)

To email the team  
- [cypd@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cypd@herefordshire.gov.uk)

**Emergency Duty Team**

[\(01905\) 768020](tel:01905768020)  
(out of hours number for when MASH are unavailable)



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

(certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-18 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

18  
CECORG

### DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the "blackout" trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

### CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-18s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app, it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

### IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social networking platforms, TikTok can be addictive: figures show that young people are investing increasing amounts of time in it. In the UK, children with TikTok spend an average of 102 minutes per day on the app, versus 53 minutes on YouTube. This compulsive repeated use can interfere with their sleep patterns – leading to irritability – and distract them from other activities.

### TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

### MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-18s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.

### LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.

### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.

### READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

### Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



**NOS**  
National Online Safety  
#WakeUpWednesday



[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)



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