



# SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER



## Autumn Half-Term One 2025/26

It has been wonderful to welcome the children back to school after the summer holidays, and especially lovely to welcome all of our new year 7 children and their families! This half-term is always a busy one as the children settle back into their routines and their new classes. As ever, there is a packed assembly agenda with lots of important safeguarding information to absorb. We have started the year with an introduction to safeguarding, with a specific focus on contextual safeguarding. We will also be celebrating World Mental Health Day, Black History Month in October. This newsletter contains some updates on the signposting that the children has received, and information on some valuable support services available.

Kind regards,  
Ms Jones and the Keep Kids Safe team.

## KEY NUMBERS

Anyone can contact the services below directly, regardless of whether you are a child, parent, carer or a member of staff. If you have a safeguarding concern, please ensure you pass it on: safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

<b>01925 443322</b> (Option one, followed by option one) <b>Warrington Multi-Agency Gateway (MAG)</b>  For urgent safeguarding concerns about a child	<b>01925 444400</b>  <b>Out of Office Emergency Duty Team</b>  For urgent safeguarding concerns about a child outside of office hours	<b>0808 800 5000</b>  <b>NSPCC</b>  For adults who are worried about a child
<b>0800 1111</b>  <b>Childline</b>  For children who are worried about their own safety or need some advice	<b>101</b>  <b>Police Non-Emergency</b>  For reporting any crimes or concerns	<b>999</b>  <b>Emergency Services</b>  For anyone in immediate danger (including if you are worried about the immediate risk to a child)



# Keeping Kids Safe



## World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is held on 10<sup>th</sup> October this year. To celebrate this, all year groups will have assemblies to raise awareness of the importance of taking care of their mental health, especially during difficult times. Our student mental health ambassadors have contributed to the creation of these assemblies, and have provided some useful self-care advice for their peers, positive affirmations and useful apps to support their mental health, such as Calm Harm and Finch.

**World Mental Health Day is celebrated every year on 10 October.**

**Poor mental health is not inevitable, and World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for us all to talk about mental health and consider how, together, we can help everyone have better mental health.**

This year's theme set by the World Federation for Mental Health is access to services - mental health in catastrophes and emergencies. The theme highlights the importance of people being able to protect their mental health whatever they're going through, because everyone deserves good mental health.



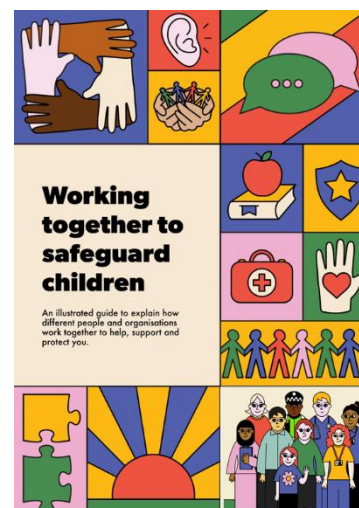
## Online Safety

Updates to the document Keeping Children Safe in Education include the risks posed by AI, misinformation and conspiracy theories. These are now recognised as significant safeguarding risks. Children have been made aware of this through safeguarding assemblies, and have been advised to report any harmful content, ensure that they fact check information, and to tell an adult if they have seen anything upsetting.

There is further information around generative AI safety and conspiracy theories at the end of this newsletter.

## Working Together to Safeguard Children

The government have recently published an illustrated guide of their key document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. This is a really important document for any adult working with children, therefore it is important that the children are also aware of the responsibilities that adults have to keep them safe. The illustrated guide is aimed to make it easy for children to understand this and to make them feel more comfortable in approaching adults when they may need support. All children in school have been sent a copy of the illustrated guide, which can also be found here: [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).



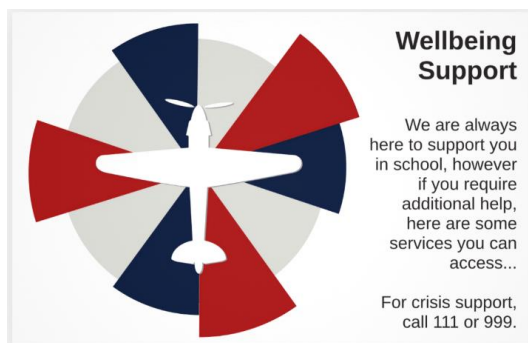


# Support Services



## Wellbeing Support

All children have been provided with wellbeing cards which signpost various support services. Children can keep them with them at all times, ready to refer to if they ever feel like they need support at times of difficulty. Form tutors have lots of spare cards handy if any child loses theirs and needs a new one.



**Kooth.com:** free, anonymous counselling via text message.

**Childline:** phone 0800 1111 or visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) for support with a range of topics.

**Samaritans:** for a free listening service, call 116 123.

**Winston's Wish:** for bereavement support, visit [www.talkgrief.org](http://www.talkgrief.org).

**BEAT:** for information regarding eating disorders, visit [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk).

**Shore Space:** anonymous support and resources regarding harmful sexual behaviour.

## Online Safety Hub/Qustodio

To help keep your child/children safe online, Warrington Borough Council have recently partnered with Qustodio, which is an app for parents/carers, enabling you to monitor your child's online activity from your own phone. The app also enables you to set screen time limits, monitor what your child is sending and receiving, and access expert advice on online safety – all from your own device rather than the child's. The partnership with Warrington Borough Council enables parents to access the app for free. Further information can be found here: [Qustodio Parent App](#). The new [Online Safety Hub](#) is also a useful website for parents to get advice on all things online, including recommended ages for apps, safety advice and articles about up-to-date topics to stay informed of current trends.

## ROAR for Girls

Warrington Youth Service have released the programme for the ROAR sessions for October – December. ROAR is a project for females of secondary school age, aimed at empowering young girls to be able to make safer decisions for themselves, to be ambitious about their futures and to challenge injustices and inequalities they may face. ROAR have partnered up with Score Creative, who will offer participants music tuition (singing, song writing and DJing) as part of the sessions.

The focus of the programme this term is to explore issues linked to gender discrimination, gender bias, sexism, misogyny, and sexual harassment. If your child is interested in attending the sessions, they can turn up without a referral.

Each session will have a theme based on a contextual safeguarding concern delivered in a 'chill and chat' format. Other activities on offer include arts and crafts, cooking/baking and tabletop activities (questionnaires, worksheets, screening tools, etc.).

Sessions are held every Thursday between 6.30pm-8.30pm and are led by qualified youth workers. Further information can be found at the end of this newsletter.

We hope you have found this newsletter useful. For further safeguarding information, please visit the school website: <https://padgateacademy.co.uk/safeguarding>

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GENERATIVE AI SAFETY

Generative AI tools – such as ChatGPT – are now commonly used by children. In fact, 3 in 4 pupils in the 2024 Annual Literacy Survey reported using generative AI, up from just 2 in 5 the previous year. While these tools can boost learning and creativity, they also raise concerns around misinformation, privacy and overuse. This guide explores the key risks and how to support safe use.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### MISINFORMATION AND ACCURACY



Generative AI can sometimes produce false or misleading content. Children – and even adults – may assume the information is accurate and trustworthy. This can affect learning and understanding of important topics. It's vital to teach children to critically assess all information, even when it comes from AI.

### EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Because generative AI is trained on vast datasets from across the internet, there is a chance it may occasionally generate harmful or inappropriate content. Without supervision, children could encounter disturbing or unsuitable material. Active monitoring and clear usage boundaries can help reduce this risk.

### PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

Some AI tools ask for personal details or store users' interactions. If privacy settings are not correctly configured, children's personal data could be exposed or misused. Teaching good digital hygiene and setting strong privacy controls is essential for protecting children online.

### REDUCED CRITICAL THINKING



Relying too heavily on AI-generated responses may reduce children's willingness to think independently. If they consistently use AI to solve problems or complete tasks, it could impact their ability to reason, analyse and form their own ideas. Encouraging thoughtful reflection is key.

### DIGITAL DEPENDENCY



Regular use of generative AI can contribute to increased screen time and less real-world interaction. If left unmanaged, it may affect physical activity levels, sleep, and social development. Striking a healthy balance between online and offline activities is important for wellbeing.

### UNCLEAR ETHICAL BOUNDARIES



Children may not fully understand the ethical implications of using AI to complete homework or creative tasks. This can lead to unintentional plagiarism or dishonest academic practices. Conversations around responsible use and academic honesty are crucial.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES

Set clear, age-appropriate rules for when and how generative AI can be used. Reinforce these regularly to help children develop a healthy, respectful and informed relationship with the technology.

### ENCOURAGE CRITICAL EVALUATION

Help children to question the accuracy of AI-generated information and seek out additional trusted sources. This builds essential digital literacy skills and supports better decision-making.

### PROMOTE ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Keep an eye on how the children in your care use AI tools. Check in regularly to ensure they're using them appropriately and be ready to step in if something doesn't feel right.

### ENHANCE PRIVACY AWARENESS

Talk to children about the importance of keeping personal information private. Make sure privacy settings are in place and explain how data shared with AI tools could be used.

## Meet Our Expert

Brandan O'Keefe, Deputy Headmaster and Director of Digital Strategy at Eaton House Schools, has extensive expertise in digital safety, safeguarding, and generative AI in education. As an author and speaker on digital literacy and online safety for institutions such as The National College, Brandan guides parents and educators in creating safe digital learning environments.



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# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Conspiracy theories are false or misleading beliefs that explain events as secret plots, often involving powerful groups. While once fringe, they are now more accessible through digital media, online influencers and because of algorithmic recommendations. The DfE guidance document, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) explicitly recognises conspiracy theories as potential content risks. This guide will help parents and educators understand the risks, spot the signs, and build children's resilience to conspiracy theories.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### UNDERMINING TRUST

Conspiracy theories can lead children and young people to distrust democratic institutions and British Values, teachers, and even their own families and loved ones. This erosion of trust makes young people more vulnerable to extremist narratives by isolating them from reliable sources of information.

### ONLINE ALGORITHM TRAPS

Social media platforms can often recommend sensationalist content. Once a child engages with one conspiracy-themed video or post, algorithms push more of the same, thereby creating an echo chamber that can intensify their beliefs.

### MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

Exposure to frightening conspiracy content, such as global plots, viruses, or government control, can fuel feelings of anxiety, paranoia, or hopelessness. For some young people, it can trigger prolonged distress or obsessive thinking.

### GATEWAY TO EXTREMISM

Conspiracy theories can often overlap with extremist ideologies. Narratives that blame specific groups, such as politicians, scientists, or particular ethnic groups, can groom children in ways that foster hate, bigotry, and radicalisation.

### CONFLICT WITH PEERS

Belief in conspiracy theories can lead to isolation or conflict at school. Children may struggle with peer relationships if they express these beliefs or become distrustful of others who disagree; sometimes, confrontation can even result in a strengthening of the belief in the conspiracy theory.

### ERODED CRITICAL THINKING

Young people influenced by conspiracies may reject evidence-based learning. This risks undermining their academic progress and weakening their ability to think critically, assess risks, or engage in healthy debate.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### I WANT TO BELIEVE

#### CREATE SAFE CONVERSATIONS

Don't mock or dismiss any questions that children and young people ask about conspiracy theories. Instead, create open, judgement-free spaces to talk. This strengthens trust and makes it more likely they will confide in you.

#### PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

Teach young people how to assess information critically. Encourage them to ask appropriate questions, such as: Who is telling me this? What evidence is there? What do other trusted sources say? Use real examples from current media to explain your answers and reasoning.

#### MONITOR DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR

Be aware of the content children are accessing, especially on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, or Reddit. Use parental controls, but more importantly, maintain ongoing dialogue about online experiences and influencers.

#### REINFORCE RELIABLE SOURCES

Point children toward trustworthy and reliable sources of news and information in a variety of formats tailored to the young person's age. Build habits of verifying facts using reliable sources, and teach them how to spot misleading content.

### Meet Our Expert

Brendan O'Keeffe is a headteacher and digital education consultant with over a decade of experience in education. As Director of Digital Strategy across multiple schools and an advisor to The National College, he specialises in digital safety, PREVENT, and pastoral care.



Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/conspiracy-theories>



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#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

# **Girls roar**

**A GROUP PROJECT FOR GIRLS AGED 11-16  
THE HUB (ORFORD YOUTH BASE)  
THURSDAY 6:30-8:30PM  
DELIVERED BY WBC YOUTH WORKERS**

## **WHAT TO EXPECT:**

**DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOCUSING ON WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT, STAYING SAFE ONLINE AND WHEN OUT IN THE  
LOCAL COMMUNITY  
ARTS AND CRAFTS  
COOKING/BAKING  
EXCITING ACTIVITIES**

**INTERESTED? JUST COME ALONG TO ONE OF OUR SESSIONS  
OR CONTACT LEAD WORKER MARTA ON 07920270014**