School Improvement Liverpool

e-briefing April-May 2021
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Safeguarding Matters

FAO Headteachers, Governors, Designated Safeguarding Leads and key professionals

All Schools

In recent weeks there have been some distressing national and local messages that have been posted online with the intention of causing alarm and distress to young people and their families.

These recent messages are believed to be a hoax and continue to be investigated by different police forces around the country, including Merseyside Police.

Advice for dealing with harmful online content

Guidance for school leaders and safeguarding teams

General advice to schools is to always avoid specifically mentioning inappropriate websites, apps or 'challenges' as it can often expose individuals to online material which could possibly be harmful. Equally it could direct individuals to the point of concern and as such increase traffic to a website and exacerbate the further sharing of the material.

There are clearly times when children and young people are already aware of particular harmful material and it therefore needs to be discussed with them in order to provide them with reassurances and appropriate advice so they do not become harmed by it or drawn in to a specific 'challenge'.

The DfE has produced guidance to support schools to consider and respond to harmful online challenges and hoaxes. In addition, London Grid for Learning provide excellent advice here.

Schools can always seek advice from colleagues in School Improvement Liverpool by emailing safeguarding@si.liverpool.gov.uk

Liverpool schools can also seek advice from Paul Bradshaw, New Technologies and Online Safety: Paul.Bradshaw@si.liverpool.gov.uk

Schools can also seek advice from their Safer Schools Police Officer or neighbourhood community policing team.

Schools should also be familiar with the guidance: 'When to Call the Police'.

It is always advisable to speak to your Local Authority Press Office before sharing a significant communication that may well attract media interest.

Guidance for children, young people and carers

- If children, young people or adults are aware of harmful online content they can report it: https://reportharmfulcontent.com/

- The police should be contacted by ringing 101 (999 in an emergency) if there is concern a crime has been committed or could be committed.

- Children and young people who are distressed by online content should be encouraged to share their concerns with their parent or carer and a member of staff at school.

- If a child or young person is distressed by harmful online content they should consider taking a break from being online for a few hours.

- Children and young people should be advised that not everything they read online is true and some are deliberate hoaxes that are created with the aim of causing distress.

- Children, young people and adults should be aware that posting harmful online messages, including hoaxes, is likely to be a criminal offence under the Malicious Communications Act 2003.

- It is important that children, young people and adults **don't** forward harmful content to others as this can create further unnecessary alarm and distress.

- Children should be aware of helplines that can support them, including NSPCC Childline **0800 1111**

- Professionals, parents and carers can seek support from the NSPCC when they are worried about a child by ringing **0808 800 5000**

- Parents and carers can also ring the NSPCC Advice Line on **0808 800 5002** for advice on apps, sites and games and online safety.

- The NSPCC and 02 also offer a service for parents to help them ensure parental controls are in place. In addition, the NSPCC Net-aware offers further advice to parents and carers about online activities.

- Parents and carers should talk regularly to their children about respectful and responsible online behaviours to encourage and ensure they are acting appropriately.

- Parents and carers should establish children and young people are not being exposed to online materials that could impact negatively on their mental health.

- The London Grid for Learning provides excellent advice to parents and carers about 'scary challenges'.

- Children and young people should be advised how to ignore **Block, Report and Ignore** any inappropriate messages they are sent. Each online platform often has advice as to how to do this.

- Children and young people should consider installing the *BBC Own It APP* as that helps them consider their own online behaviours. Further guidance for children and young people can be found here.