

SAFEGUARDING



Maiden Erlegh School | 81 Crescent Road | Reading RG31 5SL | T. 0118 966 8065 | www.maidenerleghschoolreading.co.uk | @MESReading

Welcome to our Safeguarding Newsletter

A list of local outreach support services in Reading. This can be found on the school website [here](#).

If you believe your child may be classed as a young carer please contact Miss Hancock via the school reception.

If your child may be classed as previously looked after (spent over 24 hours in local authority care) please contact our Looked After Child Champion, Mr Greener, via the school reception.

If you would like outreach support from our Safeguarding and Outreach Worker, Louise Denton, please contact her via the school reception.

Gaming

Gaming is incredibly popular with young people. We want to share some tips from Ygam about how to support young people:

- Encourage your child to enjoy both online and offline activities. Remind them to take breaks for a healthy lifestyle.
- Get your child involved in talking about the PEGI age rating system and how it can shape their gaming choices. Check out www.pegi.info for games suitable for their age.
- Create a kind and caring online environment for your child. Discuss the importance of being respectful to others, both online and offline.
- Help your child understand the importance of keeping personal information safe and using strong passwords. Have fun chats about staying safe online and why privacy matters.
- Keep up with what they're doing while gaming to make sure they're safe online. Have a chat about in-game items like microtransactions and loot boxes.
- Encourage them to speak up about anything worrying online and support them in staying safe. Show your child how to use the reporting features on their games.

For further information on supporting young people, including a free awareness session, visit [Family Hub | Ygam](#)

SAFER GAMING

TOP TIPS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1** Have a healthy balance between your online and offline activities. Remember to **take breaks** for your well-being.
- 2** Stay informed about the content you interact with. Think about the **PEGI age rating** for a game and choose games that are suitable for your age and any other children in your family.
- 3** Be kind and considerate when online. Think about how **your words can affect others**, whether online or offline.
- 4** Protect your personal information online. Use **strong passwords** and **don't share personal information**.
- 5** Think about your choices when playing games. **Stop and think before you buy things in games**.
- 6** Know how to report any issues online. Use the **reporting tools available** and **seek help from a trusted adult or friend**.

Online Safety Act

The Online Safety Act has recently been introduced as law to help keep young people safe online. Data from OFCOM shows that nearly all children (99%) now spend time online and 9 in 10 own a mobile phone by the age of 11. The Online Safety Act requires online services, such as social media apps, to take steps to better protect children online. Under its Children's Codes platforms must prevent young people from encountering harmful content online relating to suicide, self-harm, eating disorders and pornography.

Firms wishing to continue operating must now adopt a number of measures to protect young people.

There are a number of resources to learn more about the Online Safety Act which can be found at the links below:

[Government Website—Online Safety Act Explainer](#)

[Ofcom—How Ofcom is helping children to be safer online—a guide for parents](#)

[Ofcom—How the Online Safety Act will help to protect children](#)

[Internet Matters—What does the Online Safety Act mean for you and your child?](#)



MAIDEN ERLEGH
SCHOOL IN READING

Are you having trouble with finances?

Issues with housing?

Struggling with your teens behaviour?

Worries over yours or your
teens emotional health?

Do you feel like you need support
but don't know where to turn?



THEN COME ALONG TO AN OUTREACH DROP IN SESSION!

MER Safeguarding and Outreach Worker Louise Denton will be offering drop in sessions for parents and carers on the **first Monday of every month** between **9.30am and 10.30am**. If you would like to book a slot and have a chat and a cuppa, please email me at: l.denton@maidenerleghtrust.org or call reception on: **01189 668 065** and ask for Louise Denton.

**First Monday of every month
9:30 - 10:30am**

6th October
3rd November
1st December
5th January
2nd February

2nd March
13th April
4th May
1st June
6th July



PARENT AND STUDENT GUIDES



At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about YOUTH VIOLENCE

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH VIOLENCE

Youth violence affects one in four children in the UK, but it doesn't have to. When parents, carers, and educators understand the risks, they're better placed to support young people. The right support, mentoring, therapy, and guidance can help young people affected by violence to feel safe, manage conflict, and make positive choices.

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT SERIOUS VIOLENCE?

A recent study surveyed over 10,000 young people affected by violence, asking why serious violence occurs among their peers, such as an assault involving a weapon or sexual violence. The most common reasons given were due to a personal characteristic of the victim e.g., race, religion, sexuality, gender, a gang or school rivalry, and being provoked. While not all young people face these issues, many lack the emotional regulation skills needed to manage provocation.

WHAT ARE SIGNS A YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK?

Children and young people often express that something is wrong through behaviour rather than words. Be alert to signs such as sudden mood changes, secrecy around friendships, excessive phone use, unfamiliar slang, unexplained injuries, fear of school, aggression, going missing, or substance use. They may also be associating with older peers. These behaviours can indicate underlying issues that can lead to violence.

ONLINE INFLUENCES

Social media plays a powerful role in normalising and escalating violence. Platforms like TikTok and Snapchat can expose young people to harmful content, often shaped by algorithms. Many see violent material that distorts reality, leading to fear and desensitisation. A recent study found 70% had seen real-world violence online, and 80% felt less safe in their communities. Alarmingly, 39% said it made them more likely to carry a weapon. Online conflict can often spill into real life, with serious and sometimes tragic consequences.

Opportunity

UNCERTAINTY

Community

CONFLICT

Wellbeing

FEAR

Respect

WHEN IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

For children and young people in England and Wales, the hours between 4 pm and 8 pm – just after school – carry a particularly high risk for serious violence. This can stem from conflicts that escalate during the school day, online arguments, or simply moving through unfamiliar areas on the way home. Understanding this risk helps us support safer travel and routines. Our recent report found that over one in three young people don't feel safe in the area they live in, and 36% don't feel safe walking the streets.

WHY MIGHT A YOUNG PERSON CARRY A WEAPON?

Young people may carry weapons due to fear, threats, peer pressure, or a false sense of protection. Many young people tell us they feel unsafe and carry weapons 'just in case', while others may be influenced by social media, peers, or criminal activity. Some don't realise it's illegal or may believe it earns respect.

WHERE IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

Violence often happens in certain places. Busy areas like transport hubs carry risk simply because lots of people gather there. Other hotspots, like places linked to drug activity, attract those more likely to be involved in violence. Some areas become risky due to poor supervision, such as under-resourced public spaces. Understanding where violence tends to occur helps us guide young people safely through their communities and advocate for better support and safer spaces.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT STAYING SAFE

Choose a safe moment for the conversation, emotionally and physically. If a child is upset or angry, help them settle before discussing serious topics. Listen actively without judgement, even if what they share is difficult. Avoid interrupting and offer advice when the time feels right. If you're worried, you're not alone; support is available.

AVOID CONFLICT & MANAGE ESCALATIONS

Encourage young people to consider the 'Safe T's' – Trust instincts, Take a breath, and Talk to a trusted adult. When triggered or provoked, they may react from their 'survival brain', unable to think clearly about the consequences. Taking a breath helps calm, and helps them access their 'thinking brain'. Remind them that moments pass, and seeking support from trusted adults builds resilience and safer decision-making.

HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND CONSEQUENCES

Young people can be searched by police or teachers if suspected of carrying a weapon. If found with a knife, they could face arrest and criminal proceedings. A conviction can result in a criminal record. Even being present during a violent assault, encouraging it, filming, or sharing footage can lead to prosecution. Open and honest conversations can help children understand these risks and make safer choices.

REPORT INFORMATION

We all have a role in preventing violence. If a child shares concerns, you can act. For educators, it's important to follow your school's safeguarding procedures. Other adults can report anonymously through Fearless or Crimestoppers, and speak with other parents, the school, or local police through 101. If someone is in immediate danger, always call 999. These steps help protect children and the wider community.

Meet Our Expert

The Ben Kinsella Trust is a UK anti-knife crime charity educating young people through immersive workshops, awareness campaigns, and community resources. Visit: benkinsella.org.uk



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

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

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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.

I THINK ...

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'Keefe 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.



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