

E-safety Newsletter Autumn term Oct 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we head into the half-term holidays, we hope that our children and their families are looking forward to having a good rest and lots of fun. We know that the students will be enjoying having the time to explore and interact with their virtual social world and it's great to hear that our pupils are becoming more aware and mature in their internet use.

Please keep up those conversations discussing with your children about what they are seeing, hearing and learning online in their virtual world so that they feel able to share with you anything that they come across that may concern them. This also applies to things they might be seeing and hearing on the news and other media reports, in particular, many children are aware of the current crisis in Israel and this could become a source of worry or distress for them. They may not be able to pinpoint its location on a map or fully grasp the historical or political drivers behind the conflict but, often, knowing less can be more worrying. Please find attached some tips on how to sensitively address upsetting news content that children may have seen online or heard about from peers.

I have also attached a poster with some information about "Money Muling", a new grooming trend that seems very appealing to young people but poses many risks, particularly to children who are socially vulnerable and easily influenced. The 2 Johns were keen to warn us about this in our recent E-safety workshops.

Sue O'Sullivan, our Wellbeing coach, has also asked me to pass on some useful information to you:

In light of recent publications into the number of young people who use the internet to self-diagnose mental health concerns it is important that young people understand the importance of using a reputable source, such as:

[YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)

This is a great tool for young people, parents and staff to use.

If your child has expressed concerns, that you would like advice or support to address, please do not hesitate to let us know; we will be more than happy to support and advise you or signpost you to further advisory services.

Yours sincerely



Sharyn Ailara, Deputy Head Teacher
BSc (Hons), PGCE, SENDCo Accreditation

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEAL WITH UPSETTING CONTENT

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Raising children in the digital age seems to be getting tougher, with the world currently experiencing so many uncertainties. From climate change to the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Israel, right now children across the globe can scarcely go online without being exposed to unsettling stories, images and ideas. Reassuring a concerned child can be difficult, especially when bad news feels omnipresent. We've put together some advice to help you in discussing upsetting events with young ones.

1 FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS

There are many ways that children are exposed to upsetting content in the media, both online and offline. Before swamping your child with information, find out what they know already. Show them you're interested in what they have to say, practice active listening and try to gauge how much your child has been impacted by what they've seen.



2 RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE

Starting a conversation about upsetting content probably isn't the best idea when your child is studying for an exam or about to go to bed. Choose a time when they're relaxed and open to talking, to make sure you have their full attention. Remember, these conversations can become emotional, so choose somewhere your child feels safe and comfortable.



3 KEEP IT AGE APPROPRIATE

With younger children, try and keep the conversation more general and avoid leading questions and complex detail. You can go slightly deeper into the specifics with young teenagers but keep monitoring their emotional response. With older teens, you can be more open about the realities and consequences of what's happening – but again, do stay aware of their emotional state.



4 EMPHASISE HOPE

Upsetting content can make anyone feel angry, scared, sad or overwhelmed. Try to find stories of hope, generosity and strength related to the content you're discussing. Children often feel reassured when they know they can do something to help, so encourage your child's sense of control through activities which make them feel they're positively impacting the events they're concerned about.



5 MONITOR REACTIONS

All children react differently, of course, and young people might not directly say that they're scared, angry, anxious, confused or uncomfortable. Emotional reactions are natural when discussing upsetting topics, so take note of your child's body language and reactions. Allow them to express their feelings in a non-judgmental space and try to stay mindful of how they might be feeling.



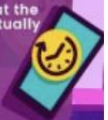
6 CONSIDER YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

It's not only young people who find upsetting news difficult to process: adults also have to deal with strong emotions in moments of stress. Children develop coping strategies by mirroring those around them, so staying on top of how you appear to be regulating your emotion on the outside is important for supporting your child through worrying times.



7 SET LIMITS

Managing screen-time and content can be difficult even in normal circumstances, but especially in unusual or stressful periods (at the start of the pandemic, for example). It's virtually impossible to keep children away from upsetting content completely, but it's important to try to limit exposure by using parental controls, talking about the dangers of harmful content and enforcing screen-time limits.



8 TAKE THINGS SLOWLY

Try not to overwhelm your child with information all at once; instead, take the discussion one step at a time. You could make the first conversation a simple introduction to a potentially upsetting subject and then wait until your child is ready to talk again. Opening the door to the conversation and demonstrating that your child can talk to you about this type of issue is a vital first step.



9 ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

Online, troubling images, posts, videos and stories are shared across multiple platforms, many of which your child might access. Even if the content is actually inappropriate, encourage your child to discuss what they saw instead of being angry at them for seeing it. Children are still learning that not everything online is accurate – you want to be their ultimate source of information, not their device.



10 FIND A BALANCE

There's often a tremendous compulsion to stay right up to date with events. Our phones frequently send us push notifications urging us to read the latest article or view the most recent video on social media. It's essential to remind your child that it's healthy to take regular breaks, and to focus on positive events instead of 'doomscrolling' and risking becoming overwhelmed by bad news.



11 BUILD RESILIENCE

News has never been more accessible. While our instinct may be to shield children from upsetting stories, it's important that they're equipped with the tools to manage this content when they are exposed to it. Talk about upsetting content more generally with your child and emphasise that they can always tell you or a trusted adult if something they see makes them feel uneasy.



12 IDENTIFY HELP

It's hugely important that children know where to find support if they encounter upsetting content online. Encourage them to open up to an adult that they trust, and make sure they're aware of who their trusted adults are. It is essential that children understand that they're not alone, and that help is available if and when they need it.



Meet Our Expert

Cayley Jorgensen is the director of FaceUp South Africa, which is a reporting system that is currently being used by schools and companies to fight bullying around the world. FaceUp helps give a voice to bystanders by encouraging them to speak up and get the help they not only want but need.



Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-57107106> | <https://www.thetimet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/> | <https://www.rocking.com/news/how-to-talk-your-children-about-conflict-and-war>



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MONEY MULING

Money muling involves individuals – very frequently young people – being recruited to transfer illegally obtained funds into and out of their bank account on behalf of criminals (often without even realising that's the kind of activity they've become embroiled in), and usually being allowed to keep a certain amount for themselves. It's essentially a digital form of money laundering. This guide highlights some of the risks associated with money muling, and provides parents and carers with useful tips to help safeguard young people against becoming ensnared by this growing online hazard.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS

Young people may be lured by the promise of quick, easy money, but by doing so they will become unwitting participants in activities that can have severe legal and financial consequences. Money muling is a serious offence under UK law: involvement in such schemes can result in imprisonment and fines (or both). Remember, the threshold for criminal responsibility in the UK is 10 years of age.

ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Cyber-savvy criminals are increasingly using various online methods, including social media apps and gaming platforms, in their attempts to recruit young people as potential money mules. The criminals often deploy persuasive, deceptive tactics to gain children's initial interest and attention, then seek to exploit their trust and naivety.

POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION

Money muling is frequently carried out in tandem with other organised criminal activities such as the drugs trade or human trafficking. Not only is money muling a criminal offence in its own right, therefore, but it could also expose young people to harmful situations as well as potentially putting them in contact with some extremely dangerous individuals.

FINANCIAL LOSSES

If they (even unknowingly) transfer funds that are traced back to criminal activities, money mules can face considerable financial losses: their bank may freeze their accounts, and they can be held liable for any illegally obtained funds. People involved in money muling often also find themselves at greater risk of becoming entangled in other forms of criminal financial exploitation and fraud.

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Involvement in money muling can have a lasting negative impact on a young person's reputation, education and employment prospects, and place colossal strain on their family life. A conviction for financial fraud would significantly damage a young person's future opportunities: they could be blocked from opening a bank account, taking out a mortgage or even securing a phone contract.

Advice for Parents & Carers

EDUCATE AND COMMUNICATE

Talk to your child about the risks and consequences of money muling, emphasising the importance of making informed decisions and seeking guidance if they need it. Create an open, non-judgmental space which encourages them to share their concerns and experiences, ensuring they feel comfortable getting help if they suspect they may have become involved in money muling.

MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITIES

If you have concerns, you might want to keep a closer than usual eye on your child's online presence, including their profiles on social media and any gaming platforms that they use. These can often serve as useful early warning systems which might help you to detect any signs of attempted recruitment by criminals or other types of suspicious behaviour.

TALK ABOUT MONEY

Discussions about avoiding being recruited as a money mule are also good opportunities for a refresher with your child about financial responsibility and good money management. It's also a helpful starting point for highlighting the importance of earning their money by honest means and the potential consequences of getting involved in illegal activities, both online and offline.

STAY INFORMED

Criminals' methods and approaches to recruiting young people as money mules frequently evolve to reflect the online landscape. Try to stay aware of criminals' current tactics and make time to regularly check out resources provided by schools, law enforcement and financial organisations. The Don't Be Fooled Campaign (at www.moneymules.co.uk) has plenty of useful information and advice.

REPORT YOUR SUSPICIONS

If you have reason to believe that your child, one of their friends, or someone they know has been recruited into a money muling operation, seek support and then report your suspicions. For your own safety, please don't attempt to directly confront anyone you suspect of organising money muling. Instead, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Meet Our Expert

Rose Savage has a proven track record in countering financial crime, having spent 13 years with UK law enforcement – specialising in money laundering investigations and asset recovery from organised criminal groups. He now holds senior visiting expert positions at various organisations and delivers customised training and consultancy to government and private-sector clients worldwide.



Source: www.moneymules.co.uk | <https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/moneymuling>
www.ukfinance.org.uk/press/press-releases/parents-urged-help-stop-rise-child-money-mules

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