

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

Secondary | March 2024

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## Understanding Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse refers to any inappropriate behaviour between children that is abusive in nature. This type of abuse is so named because it typically involves individuals who are similar in age or developmental stages.

Child-on-child abuse can occur either in-person or online, and it can happen anywhere – at school, in the park, or even within the confines of a child's own home via internet-connected devices. This type of abuse encompasses physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, harassment, exploitation, bullying, coercive control, and initiation rituals.

It is important to keep in mind that child-on-child abuse can cause harm to both the victim and the perpetrator. There is often a complex web of reasons why a child may engage in abusive behaviour towards another.

Spotting the signs that your child may be experiencing abuse:

- noticeable change in behaviour
- not wanting to go to school or spend social time with specific friends
- withdrawn or mood changes
- changes in the times spent online
- asking for money or giving belongings away/losing belongings



## 5 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD STAY SAFE FROM ABUSE

### HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT STAYING SAFE IN VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTS

Children who are aware of risks and safety measures are better equipped to recognise potential abuse situations.



### HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS AND USE PARENTAL CONTROLS ON THEIR DEVICES



Monitor children's online activities to protect them from inappropriate behaviour such as grooming. Utilise safety features on devices and apps.

### BE AWARE OF YOUR CHILD'S SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND WHO THEY ARE SPENDING TIME WITH

Educate your child on the importance of choosing positive environments and companions. Show genuine interest in their activities and relationships.



### TEACH THEM ABOUT BODY SAFETY

Support your child in understanding boundaries regarding their body. It is crucial for them to understand the concept of consent.

### PROTECTION FROM ONLINE HARM

Teach children how to stay safe in the digital world, including social media apps, group chats, and streaming sites.



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## Knife Crime: Discussing the Topic With Your Child

In the current news climate, we often hear about knife and weapon-related incidents, but it may feel distant. As parents/carers, it's crucial to actively educate our children about these risks. Early intervention is key, and here are some strategies to consider:

- reassure your child that they can always talk to you if something feels wrong
- establish sensible socialising boundaries together
- keep track of their whereabouts and company, incorporating this into the agreed boundaries
- maintain open communication with your child's friends' parents/carers


### Create an open space for conversation

- Avoid a 'big talk'. Instead, have regular conversations whilst doing other activities such as washing up, travelling in the car or doing the shopping.
- Use a stimulus as a starting point. A good conversation starter might be 'Did you hear about that incident in...'
- Give opportunities for your child to talk freely about what they know or have experienced. Listen to them and don't make assumptions.

### Open up about your fears

- Knives don't give protection. If you carry a knife, you are more likely to be injured or killed with a knife.
- Walking away is not cowardly. This may temporarily draw attention from others but this will soon go away.
- There are consequences for using a knife, this can range from; injuring or being injured, getting caught by the Police or at worst, killing someone or being killed.

TALKING TO YOUR  
CHILD ABOUT...  
**KNIFE CRIME**

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### Give them the tools to make good choices

- Discuss how they might know if one of their friends is getting involved with knife crime.
- Explore what they might say if someone tries to give them a weapon to hold for them. For example, 'My parents/carers go through all of my belongings'.
- Let them know that they can report their concerns anonymously to Fearless (part of Crimestoppers). Reporting it could save someone's life.

### Stick to the facts

- The law: it is illegal to carry a knife in a public area without a valid reason.
- You can be searched by the Police if they have reasonable suspicion that you are carrying a prohibited item, including a knife.
- If you are found to be carrying a knife, you will be arrested and prosecuted, even if you haven't used it. The maximum sentence for carrying without good reason is four years.
- Joint enterprise: you were part of a situation that could have encouraged an incident.

### WhatsApp: The Risks and Safety Features

Whilst WhatsApp may market some of its features as protecting the privacy of users, they also put children in a vulnerable position.

- End-to-end encryption means that only people in the chat can read the messages; this also means that chats cannot be monitored for illegal activity.
- Live location sharing can be useful but it also means that children and young people can put themselves in a vulnerable position by sharing their location to people they don't really know.
- View once allows content to be sent and read by users only once before disappearing. This leaves children and young people vulnerable to being sent inappropriate content and not being able to report it as it has disappeared.
- Disappearing messages means that content disappears after either 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days. This may encourage a user to send more risky content as they believe it will disappear. It can be forwarded or a screenshot taken within that time and, therefore, shared with others.

Tips on keeping your child safe on WhatsApp:

- Check privacy settings (click the cog) to see what information is currently shared.
- Talk to your child about what to do if someone they don't know contacts them (they should tell you).
- Have open conversations about what is appropriate and inappropriate content to share.