Online Safety Newsletter

Oct 2025

Risks of using AI for mental health

AI chatbots and wellness apps are becoming increasingly popular, which may lead to your child accessing them to support their mental health.

What should I be concerned about?

- The information/advice given may not always be accurate.
- Privacy concerns of how data is collected and used.
- Children may use these apps rather than seeking help from an adult.

What can I do?

- Chat to your child regularly about what apps and websites they are using and why.
- Remind them AI is a tool and not a substitute for qualified professionals who provide tailored advice/support.
- Talk to them about how they should fact check information.
- Check age ratings.

Further information

https://stigmafreementalhealth.com/blog/supporting-youth-mental-health-with-ai-a-guide-for-parents-and-caregivers/

Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: https://www.knowsleyclcs.org.uk/october-2025/

YouTube

YouTube is one of the most popular platforms, available across many different devices - phones, tablets and Smart TVS etc. **YouTube is intended for users over the age of 13,** however, younger children can still access YouTube with consent from a parent/ guardian. There are different options available to access YouTube, depending on your child's age:

1. YouTube Kids –a separate app that includes a smaller selection of videos based on the age category you select: Preschool (ages 4 and under), Younger (ages 5–8) or Older (ages 9–12).

2. Supervised accounts – a parent-managed version of YouTube that allows you to control the content your child can access. You can select one of the following options:

- **Explore** - Generally for viewers aged 9+.
- **Explore more** - Generally for viewers aged 13+
- **Most of YouTube** - This setting includes almost everything except for videos marked as 18+.

Find out more: https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/10315420

What do I need to be aware of?

Whilst YouTube can be educational and fun, it is important to be aware of the potential risks, such as:

- **Inappropriate content**
- **Excessive Screentime –** particularly due to the autoplay feature.
- **Unwanted contact / cyberbullying –** particularly via comments if your child is sharing videos.
- **Algorithms –** algorithms influence what we see to keep us engaged. This can lead to a user being exposed to large amounts of content about one topic/theme, which may not be helpful if it is negative.
- **Adverts** that may not be aimed at or suitable for your child's age.

What can I do?

- Set up appropriate parental controls.
- Show your child the reporting and blocking tools available.
- Watch YouTube together or supervise use.

Further information

https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/entertainment-search-engines/youtube-app/

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is incredibly popular with young people and is used for group chats, voice messages and video calls. **Users should be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp.**

We frequently receive reports of children using WhatsApp inappropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours, or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out. Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on hurtful behaviour?

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- **Group chats:** Everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.
- **Inappropriate content:** users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.
- **Location sharing:** talk to your child about the potential danger of sharing their location.
- **Chat lock/secret code:** users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.
- **Screentime due to addictive nature**
- **AI:** WhatsApp includes Meta AI.

What can I do?

- Check privacy settings, for example check who can add them to groups.
- Ensure your child understands that they can leave a chat at any time, Find out more here: https://faq.whatsapp.com/424124173736394
- Show your child how to block and report other users. Find out how here: https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/
- Use parental controls such as screentime controls or do not disturb to reduce alerts.
- Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be received by others. Talk about positivity and not saying anything hurtful. Ask them to think about whether they would say what they are messaging, face to face.
- Chat to your child about the groups that they belong to.

Further information

Find out more here:

- https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zc8vxg8
- https://faq.whatsapp.com/773166357950949?helpref=faq_content

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date released 01.10.25. The inclusion of any links does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement of the linked websites, documents, or videos, nor are we claiming any ownership or copyright in the content of the linked materials.

Italian Brainrot

Have you heard of Italian Brainrot? It is a viral trend consisting of AI generated characters featuring in memes and videos. It originally started on TikTok but can now be seen on other platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. There are also lots of spinoff content including a game on Roblox.

Whilst the content is generally nonsensical and children will find some of it funny, some content can include inappropriate/offensive language and content that might not be suitable for your child's age.

iOS 26

Apple have released their new operating system – iOS 26. Protect Young Eyes have published an article detailing the changes relating to your child's safety, including content filtering in Safari. Find out more here:

https://www.protectyoungeyes.com/blog-articles/a-parents-guide-to-ios-26

Managing Digital Spending

Parent Zone have created a guide to help teach your child how to manage their online spending. You can read it here:

https://parentzone.org.uk/article/managing-digital-spending-guide-parents

ADHD, Screen Time, and Healthy Boundaries

Bark have created this guide for parents of children with ADHD to support you in helping your child create a healthy relationship with technology. You can access it here:

https://www.bark.us/blog/adhd-kid-and-tech/