

GAA Families' Safeguarding Newsletter

March 2025

Welcome to Great Academy Ashton's safeguarding newsletter for parents and carers. We send these out every half term and they are also available on our website.

We hope you find it useful and welcome any feedback you might have.



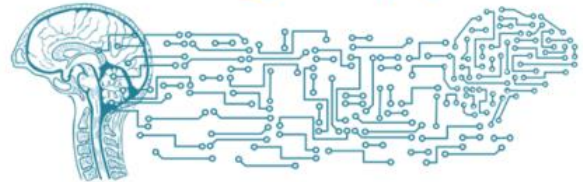
The new Netflix drama 'Adolescence' covers the potential consequences of the growth of the "manosphere" and the dangers our young people face online. If you haven't yet watched it, you may wish to make time to view it. We think it poses some very pertinent questions, as well as being a masterful piece of television & opens a discussion with your child.

What is AI?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity continues to increase, and examples include:

- Virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri.
- Chatbots such as ChatGPT and My AI from Snapchat

Artificial Intelligence (AI)



Potential Risks of AI?

- **Chat apps** - A simple search of "AI Chat" within the App store highlights the number of apps already available and just scrolling through, you can see that they are not suitable for children with many rated as 17+.
- **Image manipulation** – there are AI tools that can be used to digitally remove clothes from photos, which clearly raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes** – there are also AI tools that create realistic, fake videos which can be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

Child Rescue Coalition discuss the dangers in more detail here:

<https://childrescuecoalition.org/educations/the-dark-side-of-ai-risks-to-children/>

How can I protect my child?

As always, to keep your child safe online, it is important to:

- Develop your child's digital literacy by highlighting the risks of AI and showing them how important it is to verify what they see online.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

For further information, the NSPCC and Internet Matters provide useful guides on their websites:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2025/artificial-intelligence-safety-tips-for-parents> and <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/>

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STOP BULLYING

Growing Concerns About Sadistic Online Harm 'Com Networks':

The National Crime Agency recently published an article on their Website that raises concerns about the activities of sadistic and violent online gangs that are predominantly targeting young males.



These online forums or communities are referred to as "Com networks" which encourage offenders to collaborate or compete to cause harm across a broad spectrum of criminality - both on and offline - including cyber, fraud, extremism, serious violence, and child sexual abuse.

Evidence suggests that offenders are motivated by gaining notoriety and status, which can be achieved based on the harm they inflict and the depravity of the content they share. These networks share content relating to a broad and diverse range of extreme belief systems that they use to justify violence.

In the article the NCA highlights the threat of this type of online activity that has grown significantly in the last 2 years. Perpetrators and victims based in the UK and other western countries have exchanged millions of messages online relating to sexual and physical abuse. There are concerns relating to the fact that it is primarily teenage boys who are the offenders who are sharing sadistic and misogynistic material targeting their own age or younger. The NCA and UK law enforcement have identified several cases in which girls, some as young as 11, have been coerced into seriously harming or sexually abusing themselves, siblings or pets.

Eating Disorders:

Over 10,000 children were admitted to hospitals in England with an eating disorder last year. For Eating Disorders Awareness Week at the end of February, Shout shared some useful tips for parents and carers on how to support a child or young person with an eating disorder and what to do if you suspect they have one. Children often find it difficult to talk to adults about their eating disorder. As a parent, try to create an environment that encourages open dialogue, fostering a safe, non-judgemental space for children and young people.



<https://giveusashout.org/latest/how-to-support-a-young-person-with-an-eating-disorder/>

Reporting a safeguarding concern

If you are concerned about the welfare of a student, please contact a member of GAA's safeguarding team:



Rachel Gill
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead (DSL)



Kayleigh Davies
Deputy DSL



Michelle Hughes
Deputy DSL

via admin@gaa.org.uk or tel: 0161 241 9555

★ Thank you for reading. ★

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