

# Helena Romanes School Safeguarding

## *Parent/Carer resources and support*



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**Friday 1st March 2024**

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about ONLINE DATING & RELATIONSHIPS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Most online dating apps claim to be for over-18s only but, in some cases, relaxed age verification also allows children to access them. What's more, some popular social media platforms use similar design features to many dating sites – blurring the line between why a young person initially downloads an app and what they actually end up using it for.

### ONLINE GROOMING

Online grooming is when someone forms a connection with a child in the digital world and carefully cultivates this relationship with the intention of manipulating the child into doing something sexual or illegal. The process involves gaining the young person's confidence – which can make them far less likely to tell a trusted adult about their new online 'friend', or to recognise what is even happening.

### WEBCAM BLACKMAIL

Some young people have been coaxed into getting nude or semi-nude on a video chat with someone they met on a dating platform. They're then told that, unless they hand over a certain amount of money, a recording of the video will be posted online (or possibly sent to their contacts). This can be hugely traumatic for a young person and, in extreme cases, has resulted in self-harm and even suicide.

### DAMAGE TO SELF ESTEEM

Many dating platforms encourage users to rate the images that people upload; this has clear potential to negatively impact a young person's self esteem. On some apps, pictures of a user's face and body can be rated anonymously, with notifications informing them if someone has then declined to match with them. This form of rejection can feel extremely hurtful and degrading.

### CATFISHING AND SCAMS

Creating a false identity to deliberately lure people into a relationship (whether romantic or platonic) online is known as catfishing. Commonly, someone pretends to share interests or beliefs with their victim and gradually gains their trust. A young person's feelings for this fake 'friend' may cloud their judgement and can lead to them surrendering money, personal images, passwords and so on.

### STALKING AND HARASSMENT

Stalking is obsessive behaviour by a fixated individual which disrupts their victim's life; it can bring severe distress and even the fear of violence. There have been frequent reports of stalking cases that originated on dating apps, with perpetrators creating new accounts in response to being reported or blocked. It's a particular cause for concern if a young person has ever given out personal details (such as their street or school name) online.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Reassure your child that they can always talk to you about anything online that's worried them. Emphasise that if they're being sent unwanted images – or if they've shared images or video content themselves – they should tell you straight away. Discuss the potential risks of online dating and check in with them frequently to ensure that they're feeling comfortable about their online relationships.

### TAKE A 'SAFETY FIRST' STANDPOINT

Encourage young people to be careful about who they send invitations to – and accept them from – on dating sites and apps. Familiarise yourself with how to adjust the privacy settings on your child's devices and apps to help them control who can access their profiles and information. Talk to your child about why it's unwise to share any sensitive, private or confidential information in their profile.

### PROTECT CONTACT DETAILS

If a young person is interested in using online dating sites or apps, strongly encourage them to choose one that offers the facility to conceal both parties' email addresses when messaging prospective dates. If that's not possible, ensure that the young person sets up a separate email address which doesn't include their real name. This is easy to do via providers like Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail or gmail.

### HIGHLIGHT COMMON DANGER SIGNS

Talk to your child about some of the obvious red flags in online dating: requests for money, for instance, should always ring alarm bells. Likewise, if a young person is in contact with someone who they feel is pressuring them into providing personal or financial information – or who they suspect is trying to trick them into it – they should end communication immediately and contact the dating service provider.

### Meet Our Expert

Rebecca Jennings has more than 20 years' experience in the field of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). As well as delivering workshops and training for young people, parents and schools, she is also a subject matter expert on RSHE for the Department of Education.



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## Useful Resources

The [Essex Safeguarding Children Board website](#) has resources for parents and carers as well as professionals to enable them to fully support children and parents.

People can also follow the campaign on the ESCB [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#).

[Essex Brook](#) is part of [Brook](#), a leading Sexual Health and Wellbeing Charity for young people, with over 55 years' experience.

[The 2 Johns](#) specialise in delivering bespoke Child Sexual Exploitation Training to professionals, parents and children, with an aim to totally change the perception that everyone has of 'Stranger Danger'.

The Children's Society, whose [CARE \(Children At Risk of Exploitation\) service](#) works with children and young adults in Essex who are at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, with partners Barnardo's offering family support.

The [Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service](#) brings together a range of children's community services. Provided by Virgin Care in partnership with Barnardo's on behalf of Essex County Council and the NHS.

The [Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit](#) supports direct work with young people at risk of violence, provide training and development to those who are on the front line and raise awareness with the general public about the dangers of County Lines.

[The Ben Kinsella Trust](#) We educate young people on the dangers of knife crime and help them to make positive choices to stay safe. Our workshops follow the journey of both the victim and the offender through a series of unique and immersive experiences to show young people how choices and consequences are intrinsically linked.

Our workshops change young people's attitudes to knife crime; debunking the myth that carrying a knife will protect you. They strengthen peer values; ensuring young people give better advice to each other and challenge peers who are carrying (or thinking of carrying) a knife.

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## Who students can talk to at school

- Form tutor
- Head of Year
- Pastoral Leaders
- Class teacher
- Student reception
- Learning Support Assistants

- Senior Leadership Team
- Email [worrybox@hrs.education](mailto:worrybox@hrs.education)
- Mr Emberton - Safeguarding Lead (Secondary Phase)
- Mrs Brammer - Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Secondary Phase)
- Mrs Jennifer Hone (Primary Phase)
- Miss Sarah Knowles (Primary Phase)

**Problems outside school?  
Worried or Frightened?  
Concerned about a friend?**

**ALL STAFF ARE  
SAFEGUARDING TRAINED  
AND THERE ARE  
DESIGNATED STAFF IN  
SCHOOL WHO CAN HELP  
YOU...**

You can also speak to:

- Form tutor
- Head of Year
- Pastoral Leaders
- Class teacher
- Student reception
- Learning Support Assistants
- Senior Leadership Team



HRS Safeguarding



**Miss Brammer**  
**Deputy Safeguarding Lead**  
Her office is in E Block, next to E103, or ask for her in student reception or e-mail  
[worrybox@hrs.education](mailto:worrybox@hrs.education)

**Mr Emberton**  
**Assistant Head Teacher Safeguarding Lead**  
His office is in B Block first floor, B100 or ask for him in student reception, or e-mail  
[worrybox@hrs.education](mailto:worrybox@hrs.education)

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**Safeguarding at Helena Romanes School**

We are here to help



If you are feeling **sad, upset, hurt or worried**, please talk to our team.



**Miss Knowles**  
**Deputy Safeguarding Lead**  
[worrybox@hrs.education](mailto:worrybox@hrs.education)



**Mrs Hone**  
**Designated Safeguarding Lead**  
[worrybox@hrs.education](mailto:worrybox@hrs.education)

School Child protection policy:

<https://www.helena-romanes.essex.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=464&type=pdf>

## Online safety advice & information for parents

**Childnet** - online safety [Childnet - Childnet](#)

**Educate Against Hate** provides practical advice and support on protecting children from extremism and radicalisation [Educate Against Hate - Prevent Radicalisation & Extremism](#)

**NSPCC** [Online Safety for Children - Tips & Guides](#)

**Dedicated NSPCC helpline 0800 136 663**

The helpline will provide both children and adults who are potential victims of sexual abuse in schools with the appropriate support and advice.

This includes how to contact the police and report crimes if they wish. The helpline will also provide support to parents and professionals too.

[Dedicated helpline for victims of abuse in schools](#)

**Use of social media for online radicalisation** - How social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq [The use of social media for online radicalisation](#)

**UK Council for Internet Safety** [UK Council for Internet Safety](#)

**UK Safer Internet Centre** [UK Safer Internet Centre - Online Safety Tips, Advice and Resources | Safer Internet Centre](#)

**Commonsensemedia** provide independent reviews, age ratings, & other information about all types of media for children and their parents [Common Sense Media: Age-Based Media Reviews for Families](#)

**Internet Matters** provide age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices, and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world [Information, Advice and Support to Keep Children Safe Online](#)

**Let's Talk About It** provides advice for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation [Staying Safe Online](#)

**London Grid for Learning** provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online [Home Page - London Grid for Learning](#)

**Stopitnow** resource from **The Lucy Faithfull Foundation** can be used by parents and carers who are concerned about someone's behaviour, including children who may be displaying concerning sexual behaviour (not just about online) [Stop It Now! UK and Ireland | Preventing child sexual abuse](#)

**National Crime Agency/CEOP Thinkuknow** provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

**Net-aware** provides support for parents and carers from the NSPCC and O2, including a guide to social networks, apps and games - [https://www.net-aware.org.uk/Apps\\_games\\_and\\_social\\_media\\_sites\\_reviews\\_for\\_parents](https://www.net-aware.org.uk/Apps_games_and_social_media_sites_reviews_for_parents)

**Internet Watch Foundation** The IWF is a not-for-profit organisation that works towards the global elimination of child sexual abuse images and videos online. We help to make the internet a safer place for children and adults across the world. <https://talk.iwf.org.uk/>

**Parentzone** provides help for parents and carers on how to keep their children safe online <https://parentzone.org.uk/home>

**Parent info from Parentzone and the National Crime Agency** provides support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations - <https://parentinfo.org/>

**Breck Foundation** The Breck Foundation is a charity founded by Lorin LaFave after the tragic loss of her 14-year old son, Breck Bednar, in 2014, through online grooming. Breck was groomed while enjoying his passions of computing and gaming. We want to ensure that no child is harmed through grooming and exploitation while enjoying their time on the internet. Prevention through education is essential. [About Us | Breck Foundation](#)

Internet browsing history checks:

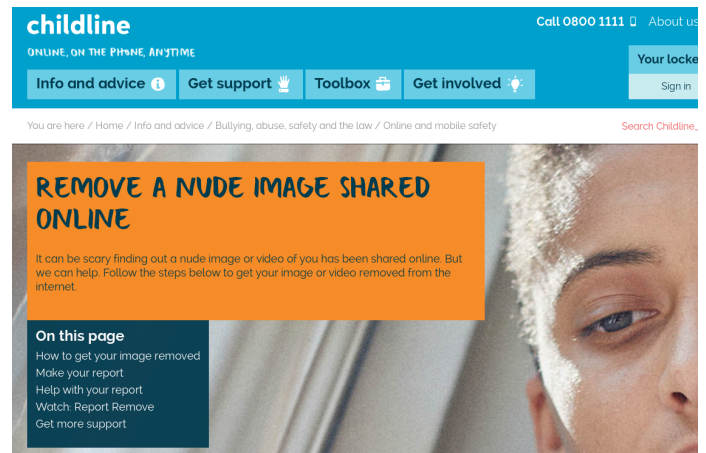
[https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/5D0Q-5XX/porn-websites?dm\\_i=5D0Q,AXHJ,3QY95R,18SAO,1](https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/5D0Q-5XX/porn-websites?dm_i=5D0Q,AXHJ,3QY95R,18SAO,1)

Only fans explained:

[https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/5D0Q-5XS/onlyfans?dm\\_i=5D0Q,AXHJ,3QY95R,18SAO,1](https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/5D0Q-5XS/onlyfans?dm_i=5D0Q,AXHJ,3QY95R,18SAO,1)

Under-18s who want nude pictures or videos of themselves removed from the internet can now report the images through an [online tool](#).

The service - from the Internet Watch Foundation and Childline - aims to help children who have been groomed, or whose partners have posted photos of them online.



To access the Report Remove facility on the childline website please use the link below:

[Report Remove: Remove a nude image shared online](#)

We are aware that a number of our students are using WhatsApp and many are members of different WhatsApp groups. It is important to remember that the freedom to use electronic devices such as phones, laptops and tablets comes with greater responsibilities for both students and parents. Please use the links below to make sure that you are aware of the age limits for different applications and how they are set to minimise the opportunity for inappropriate use.



### Does WhatsApp have any age restrictions?

As of May 2018, WhatsApp's minimum age of use is **16 years old** if you live in the European Union, or a country that has adopted the GDPR, as the UK has. It was previously 13 and WhatsApp has not yet said what will happen to users between 13 and 16 who already held accounts under the old terms and conditions. By using WhatsApp, a user agrees to provide certain personal information such as their mobile phone number, billing and mobile device information.

If WhatsApp learns that identifiable information of a child under 16 has been collected on the WhatsApp Site or WhatsApp Service, then WhatsApp may deactivate the account.

Read the full article here:

<https://parentinfo.org/article/whatsapp-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers>.

A very good video resource to watch with your children about the risks of sharing images and fake profiles on line -

Fake profile, real love story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8kls4Oec9k&t=3s>



Twitch - a guide for parents and carers - link- [Twitch - a guide for parents and carers](#)

Twitch is a streaming service which is extremely popular among young people.



Parents need to be aware of an increasingly popular application called Discord.



Discord is a chat service specifically designed for gamers to connect with each other using either text, voice or video chat. Even if chat features are disabled within online games, Discord can be downloaded separately allowing conversation to take place outside the game being played. Most major games have a Discord channel associated with them. According to Essex police, private 'channels' are being created within Discord to target and groom some young people. Please talk to your children about the use of this app and how they may be vulnerable. Ensure that they understand that the people they may be talking to and forming friendships with, may not be who they claim to be.

**Parents guide to**

**Discord:** [https://parentzone.org.uk/article/discord-everything-you-need-know-about-chat-ser  
vice](https://parentzone.org.uk/article/discord-everything-you-need-know-about-chat-service)



**CEOP**

There is a button to CEOP on the school website: <https://www.helena-romanes.essex.sch.uk/>

CEOP helps young people who are being sexually abused or are worried that someone they've met is trying to abuse them. If you've met someone online, or face to face, and they are putting you under pressure to have sex, asking to share images or making you feel uncomfortable you should report to CEOP.

This might be someone:

- Making you have sex when you don't want to
- Chatting about sex online
- Asking you to meet up face to face if you've only met them online
- Asking you to do sexual things on camera
- Asking for sexual pictures of you
- Making you feel worried, anxious or unsafe

If this is happening to you, or you're worried that it might be, you can report this to CEOP

[www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)

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## Mental Health Support resources for parents

Exam Stress

The following link covers a wide-range of tips to keep students mentally healthy.

**Supporting Your Child during Exam Time (Young Minds)**

[Exam Time & Exam Stress | Parents Guide To Support](#)

**Young Minds** <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

**SET CAMHS NHS Instagram**

[https://www.instagram.com/set\\_camhs\\_nhs/](https://www.instagram.com/set_camhs_nhs/)

Instagram account to provide advice and support to young people experiencing mental health issues. Please encourage your children to follow the account where they will be able to access early intervention advice and support.

**MindEd is a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health for all adults:** <https://www.minded.org.uk/>

**Safe and reliable advice about young people's mental health, created by experts and parents together:**

<https://www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people>

**NHS Mental Health Charities** directory: [Mental health charities and organisations](#)

**Parent zone** 10 mental wellbeing apps for all the family:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/10-mental-wellbeing-apps-all-family>

**Gov.uk** [COVID-19: guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#)

**Headstogether** <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/>



Shout [Shout: Home](#)

The Mix [The Mix - Essential support for under 25s](#)

Kooth [Kooth | Home](#)

**SAM** - Anxiety management



**HeadSpace** - Meditation & Sleep



**Calm harm** - Calm Harm is a free app to help teenagers manage the urge to self-harm.



**Clear Fear** - learn to reduce the physical responses to threat as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions.



**'Breethe'** - Meditation/Anxiety



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## Safeguarding Support resources for parents

### Safeguarding when learning to drive.

We are aware that from time to time, concerns are raised by older students and their parents in West Essex about inappropriate conduct of driving instructors. We have been given the following information to help to safeguard those accessing driving lessons:

<https://www.gov.uk/learn-to-drive-a-car>

<https://www.gov.uk/find-driving-schools-and-lessons> (all instructors on the list will have had a DBS check and passed all the qualification tests to become an instructor)

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-a-driving-instructor>

Parent zone - County Lines:

<https://parentinfo.org/article/county-lines-what-is-it-and-who-is-at-risk?>

Parent zone sleep advice:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/how-sleep-easy-during-global-pandemic>

Parent line family support: [Parentline family support and bullying helpline](#)

Domestic Abuse support: [#ReachIn](#)

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## Welfare Support resources for parents

Essex Welfare Support Service: <https://essexwelfareservice.org/>

### Essex Welfare Service (EWS)

The EWS, a service to help vulnerable people in the community in need of support and unable to access it at this time:

<https://essexwelfareservice.org/> Parents are able to 'self-refer' if they are experiencing difficulties

EWS Contact details:

Phone: 0300 303 9988

Email: [provide.essexwelfareservice@nhs.net](mailto:provide.essexwelfareservice@nhs.net)

Website: <https://essexwelfareservice.org/>

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 2pm

### Uttlesford Frontline support.

Parents with families resident in Uttlesford with children aged under 19 years on 31st March 2021 can contact the school if they are in need of financial assistance and may be struggling with food, energy and water bills.

The school can apply to the COVID Winter Grant for Families with Children in the Uttlesford area, delivered by CVSU. Food vouchers are available, or CVSU can make direct payment to utility companies on their behalf.

CVSU also has a smaller fund available to help with essential living costs. This could be for example warm clothes, blankets, boiler service/repair, sanitary items, soap and detergents, fridges, freezers, ovens.

Please contact any member of the safeguarding or pastoral staff at school or email [enquiries@hrs.education](mailto:enquiries@hrs.education).

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