Fake news and disinformation online

What's the problem?

Fake news is false or misleading information presented as genuine news.

Fake news and disinformation have been linked to radicalisation by extremists and attempts to skew people's world views. Extremist narratives relating to coronavirus include:

> Antisemitic conspiracy theories blaming Jewish people for the spread of the virus or suggesting it's a 'Jewish plot'

> Claims that British Muslims have flouted social distancing rules

> Anti-Chinese hatred

> Isis-inspired narratives about how coronavirus is a divine punishment for the 'sinful behaviours' of the west

> Extreme right-wing conspiracies that society is collapsing and far-right groups can accelerate its end

Reading information like this can upset or worry your child unnecessarily. Fake news also helps create a culture of fear and uncertainty, with children trusting reputable news outlets less as a result of fake news.

How can I help my child spot fake news online?

Tell them to ask themselves:

> **What's the source?** Is it a reputable news source, and are mainstream news outlets reporting it too?

> **When was it published?** Check the date an article was published, as sometimes old stories are shared on social media. This could be an accident, or it might be to make it look like something happened recently

> **Have you seen anything similar elsewhere?** What happens if you search for it on Google or check it using a fact-checking website like Full Fact?

> **Do the pictures look real?** Images might have been edited. They might also be unrelated images that have been used with the story

> **Why might this have been created?** Could someone be trying to provoke a specific reaction, change your beliefs, or get you to click a link?

Encourage them to **read beyond the headline** too. Many people share stories having just read the headline, then discover the actual story is quite different.

Point them to the government's SHARE checklist (https://sharechecklist.gov.uk/) and advice from Childline (https://bit.ly/3oYfsgd) too.

Safeguarding
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from The Key

What signs of radicalisation should I be alert to?

It's worth knowing what signs to be alert to, just in case. If you do see these signs, it doesn't necessarily mean your child is being radicalised – it could be nothing at all, or it could be a sign that something else is wrong.

> Becoming more isolated from friends and family

> Not being willing or able to talk about their views

> Becoming more angry

> Talking as if from a script

> A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others

> Being more secretive, especially about their internet use

If you're worried about your child please contact : Mrs Maciver (Designated Safeguarding Lead), Miss Wilson or Miss Wainwright (E-Safety Leads)

Sources

This factsheet was produced by Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key: **thekeysupport.com/safeguarding**

> How to spot fake news, Childline
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> COVID-19: how hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic, GOV.UK – Commission for Countering Extremism
> *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-hateful-extremists-are-exploiting-the-pandemic*

> Safeguarding – Prevent in education, Education Scotland
> *https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/safeguarding-prevent-in-education*

> Fake news and critical literacy: final report, National Literacy Trust
> *https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-final-report/*

> Protecting children from radicalisation, NSPCC
> *https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/protecting-children-from-radicalisation/*

> Upsetting coronavirus content online, NSPCC
> *https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/inappropriate-explicit-content/*

> SHARE Checklist, GOV.UK – HM Government
> *https://sharechecklist.gov.uk*

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