Fake news and disinformation online

What's the problem?

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

Your child might have seen fake news online about world events and conflicts, like Russia's invasion of Ukraine or conflict in the Middle East. Images and videos might misrepresent events, or be from an entirely different conflict or situation.

More recently, AI has been used to alter or completely make up fake images and videos. In some cases, it's very difficult to spot what's real and what's fake.

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

› Extreme right-wing narratives, which promote a belief that the world is ending and far-right groups can accelerate its end

› White-nationalist extremism, which can include antisemitic, anti-Islamic and racist conspiracy theories to promote white-nationalist ideology

› Islamist extremism, which promotes violence against those who don't share their beliefs, support for terrorist organisations, and opposition to values like democracy and the rule of law

› 'Incel' narratives, which promote extreme misogyny and frequently anti LGBTQ+ views as well

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?

The Key > Safeguarding

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.

For more information about fake news, take a look at Educate Against Hate's resources and guidance.

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, contact your child's tutor. You can also contact the DSL at peasterbrook@thelangton.kent.sch.uk

Sources

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

› How to spot fake news, Childline
https://www.childline.org.uk/get-involved/articles/how-to-spot-fake-news/

› 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/

› Fake news, hoaxes and misinformation, NSPCC
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/inappropriate-explicit-content/fake-news/

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

› 'Fake news', disinformation and misinformation – Educate Against Hate
https://www.educateagainsthate.com/fake-news-misinformation-disinformation/

› Let's discuss: Islamist extremism – Educate Against Hate
https://www.educateagainsthate.com/resources/lets-discuss-islamist-extremism/