

Sept 2024 Online Safety Update.



This month's Online Safety theme is 'Influencers'.

All of us who use social media probably follow famous people and 'influencers'. It can be fun to follow people that we admire or are intrigued by and to see how they live their lives. For adults, we might be likely to follow influencers who are good at DIY, fashion influencers, or influencers who have an interest in cooking. For younger people, influencers might be people who are good at gaming, into fashion, or know a lot about music. 'Influencers' on social media are usually individuals who have built a social media following due to their knowledge, expertise, or interest in a specific topic.

There is nothing wrong with influencers per se; however, children and young people can sometimes forget that these people have been paid – or received luxurious gifts – in return for promoting or persuading their followers to buy something. For instance, they might tell their followers to use a certain makeup brand because it's their favourite, when actually they have been paid to say it's their favourite, been given the products for free, and are not sharing how many filters they have used to make their makeup look that way. Although in the UK, influencers are supposed to share when something is an advertisement, sometimes they are vague and young people (particularly those with SEND) can struggle to understand that they are being persuaded to buy something.

The other risk can be influencers such as Andrew Tate or others like him, sharing harmful and extremist views. Young people might start following influencers for one reason – their fitness advice, their luxury cars, or glamorous lifestyle – and then can subtly be persuaded to take on their harmful views. These could be racist, misogynistic, or anti-LGBTQ+ views, for example.

So what can we do?

- Monitor who your child follows
- Ask them why they admire that person and if there is anything about them that they don't like
- Don't ban them from following someone, instead encourage them to follow other people who share a different point of view
- Keep talking! If your child says concerning things, ask them where they got this from
- Remind your child that there is always a reason why an influencer wants you to buy something – usually that they will get money if you do!

As always, if you are worried about online safety issues affecting your child, you can always contact us for support. The pastoral team at The Meadows can be contacted on 0121 569 7089.