

# JANUARY 2026 ONLINE SAFETY UPDATE

For the first online safety update of 2026, our theme is: Conspiracy Theories.

Conspiracy theories are false or unproven stories claiming that powerful people or organisations are secretly controlling or hiding the truth about major events. They often spread quickly online through videos, social media, or chat groups. These stories can seem exciting or believable, especially when they use emotional language or mix real facts with false claims.

Examples of harmful conspiracy theories include those about vaccinations causing autism (which has been proven to be false many times), leading people to choose not to vaccinate their children, and therefore exposing them to potentially deadly diseases. Others include conspiracy theories around certain groups of people withholding all the money and power, which often link to racist and antisemitic ideas.

Disabled teenagers may be more vulnerable to conspiracy theories because they might rely heavily on online communities for information, have difficulties judging whether a source is reliable, or feel excluded from mainstream discussions.

Believing these theories can lead to fear, mistrust, or conflict with family and friends, and in some cases, may expose young people to extremist or harmful groups. Parents and carers can help by encouraging curiosity, checking facts together using trusted sources, and discussing how to spot bias, exaggeration, or manipulation online.

Remember, the pastoral team are here to support you with any online safety concerns. Just call them on 0121 569 7089.

