

MAY 2026 ONLINE SAFETY UPDATE

For this month's online safety update, our theme is: Harmful online challenges and hoaxes.

Harmful online challenges and hoaxes are trends or dares shared on social media that encourage risky, dangerous, or distressing behaviour. Some ask young people to harm themselves or others, share embarrassing images, or perform unsafe acts for attention or "likes." While some may seem harmless, they can actually cause the child harm such as the Milk Challenge or the Cinnamon challenge. Of course, children can become emboldened by likes or suggestions being made by others and move towards more extreme, risky challenges in order to gain views.

Hoaxes often spread false stories about threats or supposed games that create fear or anxiety. These challenges and hoaxes can appear in videos, private messages, or group chats, often disguised as fun or community activities.

Young people with additional needs may be more at risk because they might find it harder to spot when something online is fake, manipulative, or dangerous. They may also experience loneliness or social exclusion and want to fit in with peers online, making them more likely to join in or share content without realising the risks. For children with lower self-esteem, the likes and comments their challenges receive can feel addictive. Repeated exposure can lead to emotional distress, self-harm, or long-term anxiety about online spaces.

What to do:

- Staying informed about emerging trends, by reading these monthly updates but also by looking at the National Online Safety website or parents app.
- Keep open, non-judgemental communication, and reassure teenagers that it's safe to ask questions.
- Model critical thinking, explaining how hoaxes spread, and discussing peer pressure online.

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

