SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

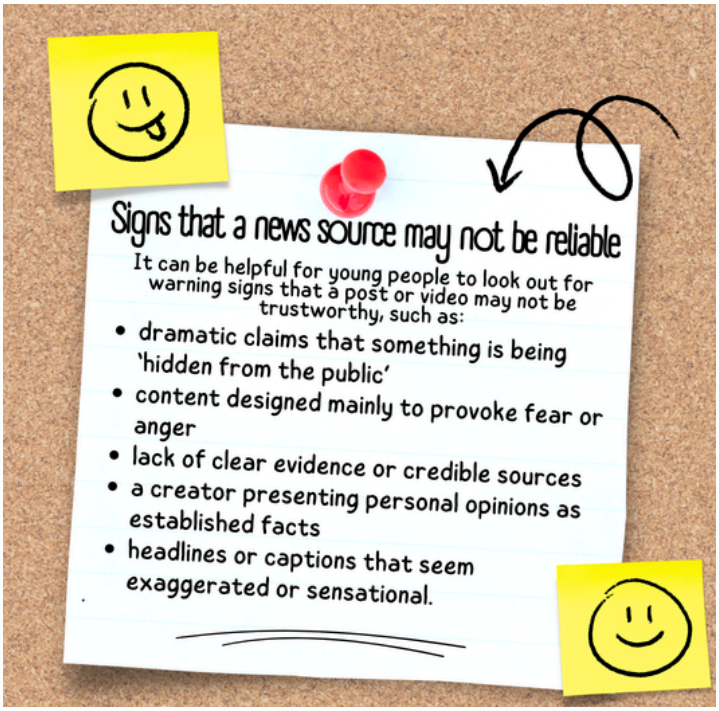
WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Secondary | April 2026. In this issue: Navigating the news online | Misogynistic influencers

Helping young people navigate news online

Young people today are exposed to more information about the world than any previous generation. News about wars, global conflicts, political events, climate change and social issues appears constantly on social media feeds, video platforms and messaging apps. While staying informed is important, the way many teenagers encounter news can make it difficult to separate reliable information from misinformation, exaggeration or conspiracy theories.

For secondary-aged children, much of what they see may not come from traditional news organisations but from influencers, short video clips or posts shared by friends. This means they may receive information that is incomplete, misleading or designed to provoke strong emotional reactions.



Conversation starters for parents and carers

TALKING ABOUT NEWS AT HOME CAN HELP TEENAGERS DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. YOU MIGHT TRY ASKING:

- "Where do people your age usually get their news from?"
- "How do you decide whether a news story online is reliable?"
- "Have you seen anything online recently that worried you or confused you?"
- "Why do you think some posts about world events get shared so widely?"
- "What do you think makes a source trustworthy?"

Supporting your child

Parents and carers can support their children by:

- encouraging them to check information with more than one source
- watching or reading news together occasionally and discussing it
- helping them understand the difference between opinion, commentary and factual reporting
- reminding them that social media posts rarely show the full picture of complex global events.

Where young people may be getting their news

Many young people do not actively search for news. Instead, news often reaches them through:

- short videos on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram or YouTube
- influencers or content creators discussing world events
- posts shared by friends on social media
- online forums, gaming communities or group chats
- memes or edited clips that remove important context.

Why this can be challenging for young people

The fast-paced nature of social media can make it difficult to check whether information is accurate. Some content is deliberately designed to attract attention by creating fear, outrage or shock. This can lead to:

- **scaremongering:** exaggerating events or predicting extreme outcomes
- **misinformation:** sharing incorrect or misleading information without reliable evidence
- **conspiracy theories:** presenting complex global events as secret plots without credible proof.

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When 'advice' online isn't what it seems -misogynistic influencers and teenagers

Social media is full of creators offering tips on fitness, confidence, dating and 'self-improvement.' Many of these messages appear harmless at first glance. However, some influencers package harmful ideas about gender inside content that looks like health advice or dating guidance. This can make it harder for young people, and adults, to recognise when the message is unhealthy or manipulative.

When misogyny is disguised as 'advice'

Some influencers frame their content around themes teenagers already care about: confidence, relationships, body image or success. The advice might initially sound motivating or empowering but it can include harmful assumptions about girls and women.

Examples include:

1. 'Self-improvement' or fitness advice

- Encouraging boys to get stronger, richer or more confident in order to dominate women or control relationships.
- Suggesting men must be 'alpha' while women should be submissive or 'know their place'.
- Framing emotional expression or kindness as weakness.

2. Dating advice

- Teaching boys that girls are manipulative, shallow or only interested in money or status.
- Encouraging strategies to 'control' or 'test' girls in relationships.
- Promoting the idea that respect and equality are signs of weakness.

3. Lifestyle or success content

- Presenting rigid ideas about masculinity and femininity.
- Blaming women for men's problems or failures.
- Claiming that gender equality harms boys or men.

Starting conversations at home

Open, non-judgemental conversations are often the most effective way to help young people think critically about online content.

You could try questions such as:

- "What kind of relationship advice do people your age see online?"
- "Do you think social media gives realistic ideas about dating?"
- "Why do you think some influencers talk about 'alpha' people?"
- "What do you think makes a healthy relationship?"
- "Have you ever seen advice online that didn't feel quite right?"
- "How do you think messages like this might affect boys or girls at school?"

How girls may be affected

Girls can also be strongly impacted by this content, even if they are not the intended audience.

Possible impacts include:

- feeling judged or reduced to stereotypes about appearance, behaviour or value
- experiencing lower confidence or pressure to meet unrealistic expectations
- accepting disrespectful behaviour in relationships because it seems 'normal'
- facing increased harassment or sexist attitudes from peers influenced by this content.

How boys may be affected

Boys are often the main target audience for these influencers.

Possible impacts include:

- believing relationships are about power rather than respect
- feeling pressure to act 'tough,' dominant or unemotional
- developing negative attitudes toward girls and women
- struggling with friendships or healthy romantic relationships.

What to do if you are concerned:

- speak calmly to your child and gauge their views on the content
- discuss them taking regular breaks from social media and balancing online and offline life
- speak to the pastoral team at school for more support.