

Harmful Online Challenges and Viral Content

At times online challenges and crazes come in many forms and can involve upsetting, harmful or viral content.  

Over the last few years we have seen a range of online challenges. Some, such as the ASL Ice Bucket Challenge and the No Makeup Selfie, can promote and raise money for great causes. However, other challenges can be harmful to children and young people and adults who take part.



The best way to respond?

It is important that the names and details of these challenges or content are not shared widely. It's far better to discuss the themes surrounding these challenges with children and young people, such as **peer pressure**, **mental wellbeing**, and **being safe online**.

7 top tips for responding to viral challenges and crazes

To help families to respond to any challenges they may face, we have created 7 top tips to consider before taking any further action.

- 1. Keep calm and do your research** - When online challenges are mentioned by children and young people or appear in the news, it's important to make sure you remain calm and have all the information you need to support your child.
- 2. Avoid naming concerning or dangerous challenges** - Naming a challenge to children could run the risk of spreading the reach of the challenge further. It could also put the focus on to one challenge rather than risks and advice which could



empower a child in all areas of their online lives.

So rather than focusing on a particular meme, film, challenge or image, talk to your child and encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if anything happening online worries, upsets or offends them.



3. Avoid showing any upsetting or scary content

- It's important to remember that even when something does go viral online it doesn't mean that all children have seen or heard of it. You can talk to your child about the risks of online challenges without showing them any examples or giving explicit details. Encourage your child to talk to a trusted adult, report and block concerning content or contact.

4. Give children opportunities to speak to you if they are worried

- It's important to give your child time and space to talk to you about anything which concerns them, including online issues. Online challenges and concerning content can bring up the need to talk about other concerning issues so it is important that your child is given the quiet time to talk.



5. Talk to children about reporting and blocking

- It's important to give your child the strategies to deal with online content or contact which worries them. This could be something they have witnessed or directly experienced. Social media, games and video platforms offer reporting and blocking tools which you can encourage learners to use. When making a report it is important that you support your child by giving as much context as possible when reporting the concerning post, message or account directly. You can find out more about how to make a report on [Childnet's website](#) or by visiting the UK Safer Internet Centre's social media guides on Hwb.



6. Talk about peer pressure

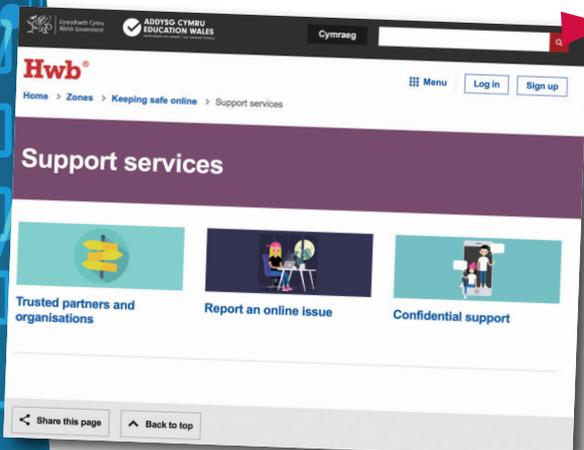
- One of the key issues raised over online challenges is that of peer pressure. Children and young people can sometimes be drawn into these challenges because it is what all their friends are doing or seem to be doing and saying 'no' can seem like a very hard thing to do.



7. Signpost to support

- It's important to ensure families know where they can go to for support. This could be a chat with your child's school or have a look at the list of [support and report services](#) including helplines for children young people and their parents and carers on Hwb.

If you find any harmful content, you can also report it.



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