

#DITTO

STAY SAFE ● HAVE FUN ● REPEAT

EDITION 17 MARCH 2019

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Foreword from **Alan Mackenzie**

Welcome to Edition 17 of **#DITTO**

Hi there, I'm Alan Mackenzie.

I'm an independent consultant specialising in online safety, specifically within education to children, young people, schools and other organizations, and parents.

I'm a strong believer that technology, for the most part, is neutral; behaviour is the most important aspect.

To understand behaviour, we have to be a part of children's lives in order to understand what they're doing with technology and why.

We have to be curious and guide them to realise the wonderful opportunities that the online world gives to all of us, and be there to support them when they need it.

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Online safety is often described as a very fast moving environment, and it is. Not in terms of the technology that children and young people are using (that doesn't change an awful lot), but definitely in terms of research and sometimes risks and issues.

I say risks and issues 'sometimes' because they are largely the same issues that evolve through the use of technology. For example, live streaming wasn't a big thing a couple of years ago, but it is now. Which means it's popular with children. This means that grooming and exploitation are a growing concern with live streaming, but it's still grooming and exploitation.

But good academic research which shows the extent of specific concerns has been few and far between in the past. That seems to be changing; more and more really good research from well-respected academics is coming out and I can't stress how important this is. The world of online safety is absolutely huge, but we have to know where to concentrate our best efforts.

I hope you enjoy this edition and if you have any feedback please do feel free to get in touch.

Alan





Vulnerability

I and many others have long argued that our most vulnerable children and young people are not getting the right levels of support, and that includes keeping themselves safe online. Resources and advice tends to concentrate on a one-size-fits-all scenario and this is not only unrealistic, it's plainly wrong.

A couple of weeks ago some brilliant new research was released by Internet Matters. This was a collaboration between Internet Matters using the research from Youthworks; Dr. Aiman El Asam and my good friend, Adrienne Katz.

It is well established that some children and young people are more vulnerable than others, but the word 'vulnerable' can take on a variety of different meanings in different situations, both online and in the real world.

I don't want to go into detail in this magazine, that would do the report a disservice, however I will give some headline findings in the hope that you will read the report in your own time. It is, without doubt, one of the best reports I have read in a long time and highlights the problems that are being faced by the most vulnerable children in our society. For example, quote young carers are often absent from school due to their care-giving role, and their parents may not be in a position to provide online safety advice, so they can miss out on learning to identify and respond to online risks. El Asam and Katz found that young carers were significantly more likely to encounter high risk scenarios online than their non-vulnerable peers, unquote, and quote looked after children are **7 times** more likely than other children to have their personal details hacked or stolen unquote.

This information is vital to the work that we do.

The study looks at a number of vulnerable groups in order to ascertain differences of experiences and vulnerabilities and splits the risks into 4 categories - content, conduct, contact and cyber scams.:

| Family Vulnerability | Communication Difficulties | Physical Disabilities | Special Educational Needs | Mental Health Difficulties |
|--|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 'I am a young carer' 'I live in care' | 'I need help with English' 'I have speech and language difficulties' 'I have hearing difficulties' | 'I have a physical disability' 'I have vision difficulties' 'I have a long-standing illness' | 'I have learning difficulties' 'I have other forms of Special Educational Needs' | 'I have a mental health difficulty' |

Family vulnerability:

- High overall online risk scores.
- Particularly susceptible to cybercams.
- Significant relationship between experiencing cyber scams and being a victim of cyber aggression.
- If experiencing cyber scams, they may have been exposed to harmful content.

Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs:

- Significantly higher overall score of all online risks categories.
- Significantly more likely to experience contact online risks, e.g. sexting under pressure, coercion, blackmail or threats to send more images.
- Greater risk of seeing harmful content, experiencing conduct risks and cyber aggression.

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- Greater risk of seeing harmful content, experiencing conduct risks and cyber aggression.

Communication Difficulties:

- Significantly vulnerable to all online risks categories.
- Significantly susceptible to cyber scams and conduct risks.
- Significantly associated with cyber aggression.

Mental Health Difficulties:

- Significantly high risk for all online risk categories.

The report goes into much more detail such as reasons and justification, please consider reading this hugely important report:

<http://bit.ly/vulnerablesurvey>



Viral Challenges

Over the last couple of weeks I've had lots of enquiries about the Momo challenge; people are understandably concerned and I don't blame them, if my children were younger this type of thing would concern me too.

What is the Momo challenge and is it a real thing?

Firstly, Momo, a creature that is going to kill people or contact children is a hoax, an urban myth. Urban myths surrounding Momo have been circulating online since 2016. The character Momo was a sculpture called Mother Bird, created for an art exhibition in Japan in 2016, and it's pretty creepy looking with long black hair, bulging eyes and the body of a bird. The sinister nature of this sculpture has seen a plethora of stories circulating, one of which is that Momo is contacting children via WhatsApp, threatening them, and getting them to carry out so-called challenges such as self-harm and even suicide.

The fact is, as with other so-called challenges such as the blue whale challenge, **nobody knows the true facts behind any of this**, but all the reports and articles I have read suggest me to believe this is a social engineering tactic to create fear (see also the excellent article from Cath Knibbs, The Human Algorithm [HERE](#)).

This is why I said above that Momo is mostly a hoax, however a number of schools have contacted me to state that children have been contacted by people/accounts pretending to be Momo. The fact that fear is being created is very real, albeit fuelled by alarmist clickbait media reporting and idiotic YouTube influencers and pranksters.

How is it spreading?

When something sounds so horrible, it gets shared very quickly, it gets picked up by the media, more people find out about it and it gets shared more. It's a cycle that is difficult

to get out of. Paradoxically, I know I'm adding to the viral nature simply by writing this article, but I've been inundated with so many requests I can't simply ignore it.

- Parents will hear of this and understandably share with other parents as a warning; I have seen countless warnings on my own social media timelines.
- YouTube influencers will capitalise on the viral nature and create videos in their quest for viewers, likes and subscribers (see image below).
- It has been reported that videos which are popular with children on YouTube, e.g. Peppa Pig etc. are being copied and edited, inserting disturbing images and messages, making it look as though the video (or the device the child is using) has been hacked.
- Fake WhatsApp accounts created and used to contact children via WhatsApp. I have even seen Momo characters appearing in games such as Minecraft.
- There are many more examples, but you get the idea. It's sinister, which makes it viral.

What's the advice?

As with anything such as this, there isn't a single piece of advice that will satisfy or help everybody, so I have split it up as follows:

For schools, parents and carers

If something like this is reported to you, as sinister and shocking as you might find it, be careful with your reaction; children will react in the way that you react. Don't fob it off, but treat it in a light-hearted and upbeat way. Tell them how fantastic they are for letting you know, that you'll do some fact checking and get back to them.

For schools

It is highly likely that many of your children have either heard of this, with a smaller number who might have seen something about it, particularly on YouTube. These urban myths are going round all the time and you can't respond to every single one.



Texting Momo *SHE Facetimed Me!* (Mystery Gaming)

The Skorys ✓ 5M views • 6 months ago

For Mystery Gaming, Gabriella looks into Momo and even uses Whatsapp to message her! What do you think? Is Momo real or is it ...



(THE REAL MOMO) DONT MESSAGE MOMO ON WHATSAPP AT 3AM *THIS IS WHY* | MOMO CALLED ME ON FACETIME 3AM

AldosWorld TV ✓ 3.1M views • 7 months ago

ALDOSDRAGON while wearing merch for a shoutout! Grab yours here ><https://aldosworldstore.com/> SUBSCRIBE TO MY ...



CALLING MOMO ON FACETIME AT 3AM!! *OMG ACTUALLY WORKS* (GONE WRONG)

ImJayStation • 2.6M views • 7 months ago

CALLING MOMO ON FACETIME AT 3AM!! *OMG ACTUALLY WORKS* (GONE WRONG) Today ImJaystation Facetim called ...

Should schools be proactive or reactive?

In an ideal world we would be proactive, but raising issues such as this with children may feed curiosity, which is the very nature of children. If a child happens to mention it in class and it's overheard by the other children you will have to tackle it. Have a 10 minute circle time to discuss it. Again come at it from an upbeat, light-hearted angle and let the children talk.

Because of the nature of things like this you may feel pressurized into responding to parents, but the advice is don't if you can help it. That may sound a little strange but for more information on this please refer to the excellent articles and advice by London Grid for Learning (<https://safeblog.lgfl.net/2018/11/parents-scare-or-prepare/>) and Kent County Council (<https://www.theeducationpeople.org/blog/online-safety-alerts-think-before-you-scare-updated-2019/>).

This is good general advice, however I feel there are times when things need to be shared, particularly when it's getting out of hand, Momo being a classic example, but you need to make that decision dependent on the particular circumstances.

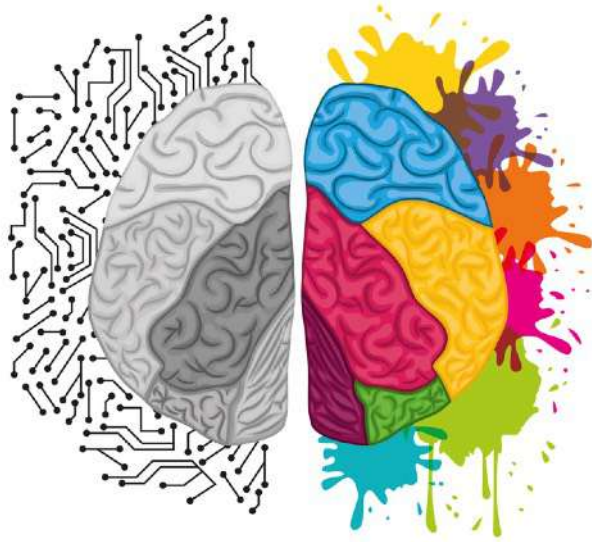
For parents

It is a sad reality that children are going to see things online that they don't want to see, and we don't want them to see it. You can put as many technical

restrictions, blocks, anti-virus and other so-called solutions on your devices and lock your house down like Fort Knox, but these things will sometimes get through. It isn't right, it isn't fair, but it's true.

- If you see something being shared by other parents, or if your child reports something, check your facts first. A simple Google search e.g. "Momo hoax" will give you plenty of information. Websites such as That's Nonsense (<https://www.thatsnonsense.com/is-the-momo-challenge-real-or-an-online-hoax-fact-check/>) can be a good source of information.
- If your child has seen something like this it's completely natural to be shocked, but try not to show that shock. Where did it come from? If on a WhatsApp message is that person known or unknown? If unknown block them. If they have seen it in a game such as Minecraft or Roblox, block and report the user. Make sure you and your child know how to block/report on the apps/games they are using.
- If your children are not using the YouTube Kids app, but rather the main YouTube service, ensure you have Restricted Mode set.
- Ensure your child knows that he/she can come and talk to you about anything. They won't get into trouble, they won't be judged, you won't take their devices away for something that was completely out of their control.





Secrets

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It's highly likely that you are not going to be surprised with the contents of this section in DITTO this month. So I thought I would let you know that if you don't read my blog and pass it on to at least 10 other people and put your name in the bottom part of this chain letter then your roller skates are going to lose their wheels on a Sunday. No really. I'm not kidding!

If you are over 30, maybe even 40 you probably received chain letters like this? Perhaps they came in the snail mail (post) and you had to write your name on the letter before posting it on? If not, then you really missed out. Well, actually that's not true because you have likely just seen this on a worldwide scale with a picture that resembles the wife in Beetlejuice when she tries to scare Lydia. Or as I have seen this week on one of the Tweenies.

Alan has kindly used the name within this issue so I will leave it to you to see how you

feel about the image and how you felt when you saw it.

So to succinctly bring my blog to you and the reasoning behind the mass hysteria that engulfed the limbic systems of so many adults, who are suggested to be the most intelligent species on the planet, actually got me thinking we perhaps might not be at times. I sat watching the responses on social media, my inbox and any communication system that could be reached on by friends, family, clients and strangers and I have to say I am impressed at the speed of miscommunication, along with a sinister undertone that I describe in my blog.

This fact is worrisome. Mass effect of miscommunication in a rapid fire across the globe; this does not bode well for fake news, fake scares like Momo/Clowns and such like. However, my meta thinking here leads me to

consider that miscommunication about important, political, climate, and real threat issues may cause some considerable collateral damage and create much more fear than the news and media currently has us believing in. What about the real news of these issues? Do they get as much air time? In short No.

Why? Well, you see the stress response in adults is important, for us to be able to regulate the smaller people on the planet, it's kind of in our job description. When we are unable to regulate our emotions and responses, we fall foul of the fear response which we pass down to the little ones, who are so very unable to regulate their emotions, fears and control these. This is entirely what happened regarding the spread of the recent debacle of fake hoax news. And schools, police, charities, and media bought into it, some of whom redacted their articles.

We essentially and potentially traumatised a whole nation of little people because we were unable to slow ourselves down, tune into our fear, respond from a place of critical thinking and share responsibly, minus the ongoing fear. And we wonder why young people cannot do this?

It kind of sums up social media as a place of humanness, which it is.

So what "should" we do?
What "should we not" do?

Simply put, my advice is to highlight some of the difficulties in the advice given by some charities and videos I saw post 'high fever' last week.

It is so very difficult for SOME children to 'report' what they have seen on the internet depending upon their fear response, fear of getting in trouble, difficulty in expressing what it is they saw and having the words for it.

If they are frightened by what they have seen or heard they may talk less about it and this is normative and also highlights how we can often think that quieter children are 'coping'.

We need to be able to talk to children about fibs, lies, hoaxes and scary things without giving them the detailed narrative of the actual scary thing, nor would I advise sitting the young children in front of PC to "show" them the images in the hope they will tell. We need to also be careful about how we share this information with other adults and when/where we do this because this is more scary for some children than not knowing- it is tantamount to sharing stories of bogeymen and ghosts (See my blog).

Alan and I have done a few podcasts together since 2017 (see link at bottom of the page) on the trends/influences and games that children are encouraged to view/share and the conclusion we always draw is about open dialogue and communication that is void of shame and fear. These emotions create shutdown and lack of ability to speak, or describe emotionally laden events.

If you want to understand these issues fully please do watch/listen to the episodes as we cover much more than can be squeezed into an article such as this.

Take care and see you in the next issue

Cath

Cyber Synapse - by Cath Knibbs

A podcast for parents and professionals for cyber issues.

<http://bit.ly/cysynapse>



DOING IT TOGETHER

Advice for parents

What advice would children give to their parents?

Safer Internet Day was in February and, as ever, it was a really busy period. I worked with a group of wonderful schools during the week, and an equally wonderful few schools the week before and after as well including staff and parent training sessions. With all of these schools I did a very similar talk to the older (primary aged) children and I wanted to know what advice they would give to their parents. This is a great way of finding out their thoughts, ideas, assumptions, concerns and so much more.

Each lesson started off with 3 simple questions; the idea was that I wanted to get their opinions, talk about their screen time, then ask the questions again to see if their opinions had changed. The lessons were fun and upbeat, every so often I would show a daft YouTube video to keep the conversations going and keep their spirits up.

1. What does the word 'screentime' mean?

Naturally all the children concentrated on the word 'time', relating this to how much you spent online or on their devices. There was also general agreement that parents are concerned about the amount of time the children are spending on their devices.

2. Is the word 'screentime' the correct word?

Related to the first question, the answer to this question was generally, yes.

3. What advice would you give to your parents?

Because of the concentration on the word time, the opinions from children all followed the obvious theme - time.

I then gave the children some examples to consider:

- **Alan spends one hour every day on YouTube learning how to draw. Is this good screen time?**

There was a mixed bag of answers for this one, some children said yes as the time was being spent constructively, learning how to do something. Other children said no; I should be spending 10 minutes learning from a video then practicing for a further 50 minutes with paper and pencil. Brilliant answers!

- **Alan spends 1 hour every day on YouTube watching 'try not to laugh' videos.**

Initially most of the children said yes, this was definitely good screen time, and if they could spend all day watching they would. However when I asked them to be sensible with their answers and pretend they're a grown up, invariably they agreed that it was bad screen time. Anything between 10 and 30 minutes was sufficient to have a little bit of enjoyment.

For those children that didn't watch these types of videos I gave the same example with a slightly different theme, for example playing Fortnite and the results were largely the same.



All the answers from the children were completely predictable because of the concentration on the word 'time'. So in the next example I wanted to get the real conversations going:

- **Alan is allowed 2 hours on his devices each night, he spends:**
 - 15 minutes on YouTube learning how to draw, then 45 minutes practicing.
 - 10 minutes watching 'try not to laugh' videos.
 - 50 minutes playing games with his friends.

I made clear that the timings were irrelevant and they can chop and change them round.

This time the answers were exactly what I had hoped for. The large majority of the children agreed that this is good screen time, not because of the time, but because there is a variety of things going on, namely learning, having fun and socialising.

So coming to the end of this part of the lesson, I then asked the children the same questions from the beginning. They said that the word 'screentime' is misleading because it doesn't take into account what you are actually doing. Many even stated that the weekly screen time alerts you get on your devices are completely useless because it doesn't take the activity into account and it feels judgemental, and I would completely agree with this.

The point of the lesson wasn't to get children to rise up and start arguing with their parents about their screen time, but to give the children the information to have a good, open conversation with their parents, and this is with good reason: the advice that is always

given to parents is to talk to their children about online activities. Screentime is often a big concern for parents, but shouldn't children also have the right information to have an open and honest conversation?

So coming back to the final question, 'What advice would you give to your parents about screen time?', this is what the children said (paraphrased for simplicity and not all the answers relate to the original questions):

Time is important and there should be time boundaries in place; we would prefer no boundaries but understand why they have to be there so that I know when I am overstepping the mark.

Understand what I am doing online; you might see me sitting in front of my device for hours and get annoyed with this, but I'm doing lots of different things. I'm learning, I'm having fun and I'm socialising with my friends. Spend some time with me and learn what I am doing (a few children described this as - spend a day in my shoes).

Learn the dynamics of the games that I'm playing; when you call me down for dinner I might be annoyed because I've just spent 30 minutes trying to finish a level in my game and I can't save it. Instead give me a warning - 15, 10 and 5 minutes. Then I've got no excuse.

If I'm not allowed to use my phone at the dinner table, that should be a rule for everyone.

There's nothing striking in these answers, the children were being really open and honest and the point was to move away from the word screen time to screen use. Whilst time is important, what they are doing is even more important and if both children and parents have this information it allows for those same open and honest conversations at home.

My advice to parents would be to have a conversation similar to this at home. Explore screen time and screen use with your child, ask them for their concerns or frustrations so that you can talk about it together.

Alan Mackenzie

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<http://www.esafety-adviser.com/onlinesafetypro>



On YouTube, a network of paedophiles is hiding in plain sight.

This was the headline in a recent WIRED article which you can see here - <http://bit.ly/ytwired> - **discretion advised, it's quite hard-hitting.**

According to the article (and other reports I've seen), scores of YouTube videos with tens of millions of views are being inundated with comments by offenders.

These comments seem to be where there are videos of children who are showing their underwear or even naked, doing the splits or lifting their top, and the offenders are commenting with a timestamp, indicating where that particular part of the video is, or commenting on the activity.

The videos all appear to be completely innocent (from the perspective of the child), for example gymnastics, playing in the pool, but some of the comments are too sickening for me to even mention here. Furthermore, offenders are curating channels with lots of videos that they have found to make it easier for other offenders to watch.

When something like this comes to light, advertisers (the revenue stream of YouTube) start to get twitchy and will start pulling their ads, and this is the key to getting these companies to take appropriate action - by hitting them where it hurts - money.

On Feb 28th it was reported that YouTube will no longer allow the majority of channels featuring children to include comment sections, and over the coming months YouTube will remove comments from videos that feature

minors. They stated that they have, so far, deleted tens of millions of comments (using a new algorithm) and removed more than 400 channels associated with writing predatory comments.

One question I have, when YouTube refer to children or minors, what ages are they referring to? I don't know, but if I find out I'll let you know.

I need to stress a personal opinion here. This isn't the fault of YouTube; these are innocent children having fun who are being preyed on. However, companies such as YouTube have a duty of care to protect children and I think they have got a long way to go.

You might be thinking that young children shouldn't be on YouTube. These things are never that simple, for example what about parents innocently uploading videos of their children playing, having fun, on holiday etc.?

For parents:

Check if your child has their own channel and look through the content to make sure that everything is okay. If you allow your child to have their own channel, make sure that you watch the video before it is uploaded.

If you share videos of your children online, check the content; as innocent as you think it is, that content may be used by predators.

Alan Mackenzie

APPS

There are tens of thousands of apps out there; nobody can keep up with all the new apps that are coming out. I have compiled a list below of the more popular apps that I personally find when talking to children and young people.

It isn't an exhaustive list, just the more popular ones.

Remember: all apps have age restrictions. Usually this is 13 but there can be differences, for example WhatsApp raised their age to 16 for persons within the EU last summer, and YouTube states you have to be over 18 to have your own account, but you can be 13 with parental permission. Also bear in mind that all of these age restrictions are ridiculously easy to circumvent

You may notice I haven't included Facebook. Quite often this is cited as the most popular, however that is in terms of the amount of users, not its popularity.



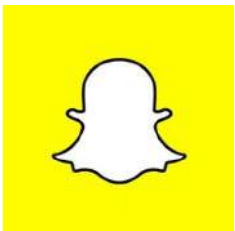
WhatsApp
Age: 16 (in EU countries)
Used for: mostly messaging.



YouTube
Age: 18 to have your own account or channel, can be 13 with parent permission.
Used for: mostly messaging.



Instagram
Age: 13
Used for: images, stories, messaging (including private messaging).



Snapchat
Age: 13
Used for: images, stories, streaks, messaging (including private messaging).



TikTok (who bought out Musically in 2018)
Age: 13
Used for: short videos, messaging.

To see an extensive list of the most popular (in terms of the numbers of users) see here

<http://bit.ly/popsm2019>

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

I'm quite often asked what the best resources for parents are. Not an easy question to answer as it would depend on what your concerns are, your level of knowledge, or a particular risk that you would like more information on.

I have listed below 4 of what I believe to be the best, current and up to date resources.



Common Sense Media

To learn more about the games or apps your children are using, Common Sense Media covers thousands, which includes advice and reviews from other parents:

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

The logo for Internet Matters, consisting of the text "internet matters.org" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid green rectangular background.

Internet Matters

Tons of age-specific related information created specifically for parents. Includes information to set up devices.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>



YouTube

With over 5.5 billion videos, if you need to know something there's a good chance it's here. Use simple searches such as, "What is..." "How do I..."

<https://www.youtube.com>



School

The school your child goes to is a wealth of information. If you're not sure or don't know where to turn to, they can and will help. Find out what your child does in school about online safety so that you can replicate the same advice at home.



Contribute to the magazine

I'm always on the lookout for great content to share with schools and parents, but I also know that people have their own individual stories to tell. This information can be hugely beneficial for everybody.

- Are you a parent who has experienced something with your child? What was it and what did you do? Has your child experienced something and would he/she like to share their advice with others?
- Are you a school that has experienced a series of incidents? How did you tackle this? Do you have an innovative way to engage with specific online safety topics in the school?
- Do you have an opinion or a thought-provoking idea?

Drop me an email and let me know your thoughts. Everything can be kept anonymous if you wish.

Alan Mackenzie

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