

## UPDATES FOR STAFF (1) 4.10.21

### **Instagram safety changes receive cautious welcome from NSPCC**

Social media platform Instagram has announced a range of new safety features to protect teenage users of the site, with adults prevented from sending a direct message to any user under 18 unless the account already follows them and safety alerts sent to younger users if adults they are in contact with display suspicious behaviour. The firm issued a statement saying: "Protecting young people on Instagram is important to us. Today, we're sharing updates on new features and resources as part of our ongoing efforts keep our youngest community members safe."

*Evening Standard*

### **Rise in number of children suffering eating disorders**

New NHS England data reveals that hospital admissions for children with severe eating disorders hit a record high in the pandemic. Figures show there were 2,682 admissions of children aged 17 and under with a primary diagnosis of eating disorders in April 2020 to March 2021 - up by 34% on the previous year. Of these, 2,458 admissions were female patients, up from 1,807 in 2019-20. Peter Kyle, the Shadow Schools Minister, said: "The absence of school during lockdown has meant the effects on young people's health, wellbeing and safety went unchecked - even caring parents are often untrained to observe the sometimes subtle signs of disorder in young people."

*The Mail on Sunday*

### **NSPCC service allows children to remove sexual images of themselves online**

A new NSPCC Childline service will enable children to get sexualised images of themselves removed from the internet. The investigators at the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) will be able to block the uploading or redistribution of the images after verifying their age and ID. They will give the images digital fingerprints which enable internet firms, including social media platforms, to then block them. The move comes amid a surge in self-generated sexual images by children, with the numbers independently identified by the IWF more than doubling from 17,500 to 38,000 in the first three months of this year, compared with the same period last year. Cormac Nolan, the service head for Childline Online, said: "The impact of having a nude image shared on the internet cannot be underestimated. That's why Childline and the IWF have developed Report Remove to provide young people a simple, safe tool that they can use to try to help them regain control over what is happening and get this content erased."

*The Daily Telegraph*

## Police figures reveal rise in child on child sexual abuse

A report by BBC's Panorama is to reveal that police figures of children sexually abusing other children increased to 16,000 cases in 2019, up from almost 8,000 in 2017. Figures show that 10% of alleged abusers were 10 or under, while around nine out of 10 of the alleged abusers were boys, with eight of 10 alleged victims being girls. Darren Gelder, head of **Grace Academy** in Solihull, West Mids, said: "It's got to be taken seriously." Vicky Ford MP, Minister for Children, said guidance and training for teachers has been introduced for handling such reports.

*Daily Mirror*

## National system could prevent children from becoming involved in county lines and gangs

Former children's commissioner Anne Longfield has launched a new initiative to stop what she calls a "conveyor belt" of vulnerable children falling into the hands of gangs and criminals. Ms Longfield is launching The Commission on Young Lives which aims to work with other youth groups to design a new national system to prevent children from becoming involved in county lines and gangs. The commission warned that even before COVID hit in March 2020, almost 15,000 children had been referred to social services over gang fears in the previous 12 months - a rise of 4,000 on the previous year. Ms Longfield said: "We know that COVID has dealt a real blow to those kids - the vulnerabilities that they've experienced at home; addiction, domestic violence, have increased and lot of them also aren't connecting back into school so they are at risk of falling off the radar."

*Sky News*

## Under-16s do not need parental consent for puberty blockers, court rules

The Court of Appeal has ruled that children under the age of 16 will be able to take puberty blockers to treat gender dysphoria without parental consent. The ruling overturns a previous conclusion by the High Court, which said it was "highly unlikely" that a child aged 13 or under would be able to consent to the hormone-blocking treatment, and that it was "very doubtful" a child of 14 or 15 would understand the long-term consequences. The appeal was brought by The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the only gender identity development service (GIDS) for children in the UK.

*The Daily Telegraph*