

## TEENAGE ISSUES

Teenagers' blossoming interest in romantic relationships and their devotion to online networking is a potent combination – and, regrettably, not always a safe one. It raises all kind of worries about the possibility of sharing intimate images or deeply personal information; and that's simply with contacts their own age – to say nothing of the chance of connecting with an older stranger.

MyLOL – a site which specifically facilitates interaction between 13 to 19-year-olds – has amassed around a million users worldwide, but sadly its safeguarding protocols can't match that level of success. The ease with which an adult could pose as a teen under a bogus birthdate makes grooming a realistic threat – and that's far from the platform's only risk, as our guide explains.

### What Parents and Carers Need to Know about Persuasive Design Online

For many companies who operate in the online space, attention and engagement are the holy grail. Social media sites in particular make deliberate creative choices to keep people scrolling, reading, watching and clicking. This phenomenon is known as 'persuasive design' and it's being employed in the vast majority of the digital world's most popular destinations.

A study by the charity 5Rights Foundation concluded that "...the brain's response to rewards and punishments can be leveraged through persuasive design to keep children online." To tie in with Safer Internet Day 2024, our #WakeUpWednesday guide can help to educate youngsters on the effects of persuasive design – and suggests ways to insulate themselves from its influence.

### Smartphone Tips

According to Ofcom, 69% of under-18s use a smartphone as their main method of going online. Additionally, 49% of children use them for online gaming – putting smartphones only behind consoles (59%) as the device of choice for playing games on. Most people won't require such statistical evidence, however, to acknowledge the huge importance of phones to young people.

Given that Santa's recent visit is likely to have bestowed smartphones on an even greater number of young people, it's a particularly opportune moment to ensure that children are able to use their handsets responsibly – and, above all, safely. From passcodes to parental controls, and from screen time to scams, our #WakeUpWednesday guide has the essential advice.