

A reminder from CEOP about what to do about viral scares online:

‘Over the last few days the staff at CEOP have been made aware that in some areas of the UK there has been information circulating among professionals about online viral scares and challenges, in some cases involving local news articles.

We wanted to remind you of our guidance for parents and carers, and our advice on responding to such situations:

Stories and warnings often circulate online and offline, about online scares or suicide challenges which are alleged to have encouraged children to engage in harmful activities. Most have been found to be hoaxes, fake news or wildly exaggerated stories, however it is important that the children and young people you work with know how to seek help should they require it.

One of our core values is not to frighten or scare-monger. Therefore, we do not advise sending warnings out to parents and carers or publicising issues on your newsletters or social media pages. Whilst sharing warnings is often done with good intentions, it can pose risks.

Seeing or hearing about this content can be distressing for both children and their families. If a child has not heard about the scare, it can make them curious, and they may look for the content online which they could find upsetting. By publicising, there is also a risk that an individual will create a website with harmful content based around the scare.

We suggest that if parents or carers come to you directly, worried about information they have seen or heard about a scare, you should signpost them to our article, which contains further information and links to other resources.

Our key message for parents and carers is to remind their children that if they ever see something online that frightens or worries them, or been approached by someone they don't know who makes them feel uncomfortable, they should talk to a trusted adult about this.

If a child, or their families come to you with a concern that their child may have seen, or been involved in, a viral scare or suicide challenge, you should follow your safeguarding procedures. With the schools summer holidays upon us, you can also remind parents and carers that as well as reading the Thinkuknow article, they can report content directly on the platform or service they are using. If they are concerned about contact made to their child online, they can also report to CEOP www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre or contact their local police force.

Don't forget, we are still here and our #OnlineSafetyatHome campaign continues over the summer. We will be providing support for parents and carers through new video guides, articles and short activities to encourage conversations about online safety, so encourage parents and carers to follow us on Facebook or Twitter, and look out for updates.’

The link to the article is: www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/theres-a-viral-scare-online-what-should-i-do/