

Intell

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-  PAPHYRUS on suicide prevention
-  Relationships education & RSE
-  Virtual reality & gaming
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In this edition of Intell, we invited PAPHYRUS, the UK charity for the prevention of young suicide, to share their thoughts about building positive, suicide-safer, school and college communities. We've also taken a look at the information from the Department for Education about the introduction of relationships education and RSE. The recent launches of two Sony video games, 'Blood & Truth' and 'Dreams', that each offer a new level of virtual reality experience, prompted us to consider the impact of virtual gaming on children and young people. Finally, given the increasingly popular live streaming apps and social networks, particularly amongst young gamers, we've taken a look at the different risks that children and young people may encounter whilst watching streams and live streaming.



During Children's Mental Health Week 2019, PAPHYRUS teamed up with Radio City for a 4-hour live broadcast from St George's Hall in Liverpool. The 226 shoes placed on the steps of St George's Hall represented the number of school children who lost their lives in 2017.

We need to address the issue of suicide in schools and colleges

Preventing suicidal thoughts needs a multi-faceted approach, including building resilience and ensuring early intervention and support, and it's important that the whole school or college community nurtures an attitude about the subject of suicide.

Our vision is for a society which speaks openly about suicide and has the resources to help young people who may have suicidal thoughts.

Every year, over 200 school children die by suicide in the UK. While we hope that no community will lose a young person to suicide, the reality is that many students are struggling with suicidal thoughts, often without the support they need.

A 2017 survey, commissioned by PAPHYRUS, found that one in 10 (11%) of teachers said, on average, a student shares suicidal thoughts with them once a term or more. Yet the survey also identified a real need for support and training in the sector.



Useful advice for teachers

- **Identify your concerns**

If you have concerns about a student, let them know. Do they seem sad or not their usual self? What have you heard them say that makes you concerned? Is your instinct telling you that something is concerning?

- **Ask them directly: “are you thinking about suicide?”**

It is impossible to provide a definitive checklist of things to look out for to help you identify if someone is thinking about suicide because every young person is different. Rest assured you can't make matters worse by asking the question. You don't need to interrogate them or try and 'fix it' for them; you just need to ask the question. The only way to check whether your intuition is correct is to ask the young person directly and clearly about suicide. By using the word suicide you are telling them that it's OK to talk openly about their thoughts of suicide with you.

- **Don't dismiss what they are saying**

You might feel unprepared for the disclosure, but your calm and sensitive response will let them know that they can talk about suicide with you. You may need to refer to your suicide prevention policy or safeguarding team. If so, you need to tell the student that you have to share information with others. You may not have to share why they are having those thoughts.

- **Listen**

Allow them to express their feelings. Reassure them that they are not alone and that you can look for help together.

- **Get support and advice**

If you are concerned that a young person you know may be having thoughts of suicide, you can contact PAPYRUS HOPELINEUK for confidential advice and practical support, on 0800 068 4141.

The language we use to describe suicide needs to change.

Suicide hasn't been a crime since 1961. Yet, using the phrase 'committed suicide' suggests it is still a crime, which perpetuates stigma and shuts people up – students will be less likely to talk about their thoughts of suicide if they feel judged. Using sensitive and appropriate language can help increase empathy and support.

For instance, instead of “committed suicide” use: “ended their life”, “killed themselves”, “took their own lives” or “died by suicide”.

Unhelpful language when talking about attempted suicide:

- **“Unsuccessful” or “failed” suicide**

Young people who attempt suicide may say “I couldn't even do that right”. They shouldn't feel further burdened by the fact that their attempt was a 'failure' as this may reinforce negative feelings.

- **“Attention seeking”**

- **“It was just a cry for help”**

Having suicidal thoughts is a serious matter. Yet these sorts of phrases are dismissive and belittle someone's need for help.

Children and young people who attempt suicide need attention, support, understanding and help.

Talking openly and directly about suicide is important.

Questions you might ask a student you have concerns about:

- “It sounds like life feels too hard for you right now and you want to kill yourself, is that right?”
- “When you say you don't want to be here anymore, do you mean that you want to be dead forever?”
- “It sounds like you're thinking about suicide, is that right?”

As part of their #SaveTheClass campaign PAPYRUS has developed a guide to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention in schools and colleges, aimed specifically at school and college staff. It aims to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support students who may be having suicidal thoughts. You can access the guide at papyrus-uk.org/save-the-class-download.



Lets talk about relationships and sex education

With the new statutory guidance from the Department for Education requiring all primary schools to deliver 'relationships education' and secondary schools to deliver 'relationships & sex education' (RSE) from September 2020, children and young people will be discussing sensitive issues which may, in turn, lead to an increase in teacher and self-reported safeguarding incidents.

Consider the following scenarios, which could become fairly typical:

- After a lesson on consent in sexual relationships a pupil Googles 'sexual consent'. Is the material they view informative, accurate and age-appropriate?
- A pupil comes away from a lesson that covered LGBTQ+ relationships. It prompts questions about their own sexuality which they explore online. Are they simply exploring their sexuality or are they suffering from anxiety as a result of their feelings?
- An open discussion in a RSE lesson leads to a pupil being bullied on Facebook because they are less experienced than their peers.

The team at eSafe is anticipating an increase in young people exploring the web for related content and discussion groups, and is, of course, geared up for detecting the early warning signs of the vast range of related safeguarding concerns.

NHS stats show that poor levels of mental health among LGBTQ+ people have often been linked to experiences of discrimination and bullying. And while a person's sexual or romantic orientation or gender identity may not be the source of distress, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or any other orientation or gender identity, may find that the social stigma of living as a minority is a source of stress or anxiety.

Parentzone provides support and information to help both parents and young people on a variety of LGBTQ+ related issues. You can access their resources at parentzone.org.uk/lgbtq-hub.

Pupils should be able to understand the world in which they are growing up, which means understanding that some people are LGBT, that this should be respected in British society, and that the law affords them and their relationships recognition and protections.

Department for Education 2019

10 steps to the new curriculum

1. Understand the new legislation and what it means for your school.
2. Gather pupils' views; consider how your provision will need to be tailored.
3. Audit your current provision; define what needs to change.
4. Assign a working team to oversee the implementation of the new provision.
5. Create a policy that reflects your aims and reinforces your school ethos and values. Schools must have a written policy for relationships education and RSE.
6. Develop a comprehensive and flexible curriculum that can respond to your pupils' needs at different points in time.
7. Review safeguarding policies to consider potential issues that may arise as a result of the new curriculum. Particular attention should be given to SEND and vulnerable students who may be at risk of sexual exploitation.
8. Equip staff through knowledge sharing and training sessions as all staff have a role to play. Some staff will need specialist training given the sensitive nature of this area, especially when dealing with incidents picked up in the digital environment by eSafe.
 - For example, eSafe incident reports involving LGBTQ+ and non-binary young people must be treated with extra caution, especially if the involvement of parents is being considered: there's the risk of 'outing' them before they are ready to tell their parents or that their home may not be a safe place for the user to be gender variant or LGBTQ+.
9. Bring the whole school community with you, including governors and parents, through effective and ongoing communication as well as consultation opportunities. This will help ensure the smooth transition to the new provision.
 - Consider timely points to share progress and development about your plans, and garner community-wide feedback.
10. As with any subject, monitor and evaluate the provision (ongoing); make refinements as needed.



Example markers of anxiety:

"I stress about passing"; "I might not pass"

A trans young person who is concerned about whether or not they will 'pass' as their intended gender.

"Trangst"; "I'm feeling transgsty today"

The angst that comes with the transgender status.

"Deadnaming"; "I've been deadnamed"

A deadname is the birth name of a person who has since changed their name. This term is commonly used in the transgender community. 'Deadnaming' a trans person can cause offence and distress.



Round-up of virtual reality & gaming

Virtual reality (VR) has dominated tech headlines in recent years and has lots of uses: it's brilliant for entertainment and a fantastic platform for education, with virtual field trips giving an incredibly immersive experience of the subjects children and young people are exploring, and is revolutionising the sports industry for players and viewers alike. But it is perhaps best known for its use in the video gaming world.

Players wear VR headsets and see the virtual environment from a first-person perspective. As they turn their heads and move around the world moves accordingly; the technology engages the whole body, eyes and ears. This sensory immersion combined with the user's ability to make natural gestures and to interact with characters and objects creates a very real experience.

...a good rule [for parents] is, if you wouldn't want your children to live with the memory of the event in the real world, then don't have them do it in VR. Travelling to the moon is fine, but scary experiences will stay with them.

Commonsense 2019

What's the impact on young people?

VR tricks users' brains into thinking that objects on a screen that are just centimetres from their eyes are actually far away. This is such new technology that no one knows yet what the long-term effects of this are, especially on children whose bodies and brains are in the process of developing. Some experts have raised concerns about short sightedness (myopia) which children may be more vulnerable to if they are focusing on something very near to them for long periods of time.

While there is currently limited research and resources available, Commonsense have produced an insightful report into VR: "Virtual Reality 101: What You Need to Know About Kids and VR", which you can access at commonsensemedia.org/research/virtual-reality-101.

Dreams (Sony Playstation 4): a game where anyone can create anything

Less of a video game, more a powerful piece of game development software, the eagerly anticipated (almost 6 years in the making) Dreams VR game encourages players to turn 'anything in your imagination into reality'. Players make their own characters, worlds and interactive adventures to share with a massive online community, where they can also browse other players' creations and bring elements of them into their own games.

This has been given a PEGI rating of 7. However, similar to Roblox, this is an open source game where players can create anything – from first-person shooter games, to recreations of horror games to puzzles games and anything in-between.

Parents should be aware that the game experience may change significantly when players encounter and interact with other players' creations. The Playstation VR is helpful in this respect as parents can see what the player is seeing, mirrored to the television.

As with Roblox, however, the team at eSafe would ultimately question the suitability of this game concept for children given its unregulated approach to content.



Image source:
Sony Interactive
Entertainment

Blood & Truth (Sony Playstation VR): blast your way through London underworld

Sony's British gangster thriller game, Blood and Truth, is inspired by the likes of John Wick and Die Hard. Players 'inhabit' the role of cockney gangster and former Special Forces soldier, Ryan Marks, who must save his family from a London crime boss.

In the development of the game, Sony not only involved talent from Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter to help with the visual effects but also hired a real-life SAS consultant to help get the details right.

Reviewers rave about how this game is different from other first-person shooter games – the vibration of weapons can be felt as they're re-loaded and holstered, for example: players feel like part of the scene, fully immersed in the action, rather than passively watching the action play out. This leads to the obvious questions about how virtual the violence really is, and whether this experience can lead to negative behaviour in the physical world. Unsurprisingly, given the level of violence and authenticity, this game has a PEGI rating of 16 meaning it's unsuitable for younger players.

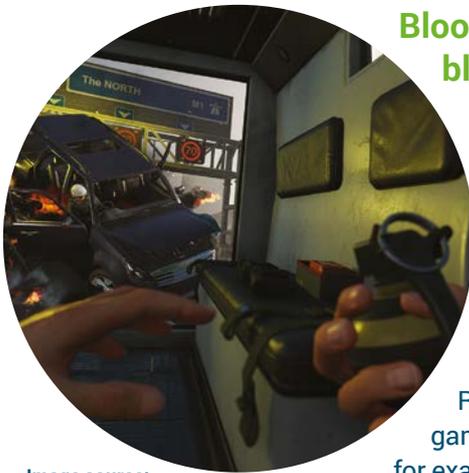


Image source:
Sony Interactive Entertainment

Useful for parents

- None of the current range of higher end headsets on the market are recommended for under 12s; even Google's cardboard headset comes with the recommendation that children should be supervised.
- Manufacturers consistently advise that children should be monitored and take regular breaks. According to the Oculus manual, "prolonged use should be avoided as this could negatively impact hand-eye coordination, balance and multi-tasking ability".
- Parents should try the games out before younger players experience them and keep a close eye on their in-game behaviour.
- Some people report that the VR experience can trigger feelings of nausea or motion sickness. The PlayStation VR guide states that "in many cases, initial discomfort experienced can fade as you acclimate to VR gameplay".
- As well as the potential physical side effects, of more concern for parents may be the psychological effects these games have on children. Would their child be prepared for the experience of being killed in a virtual world (for example)?

The low-down on live streaming

Tik Tok, Yubo, Twitch, YouKnow, Periscope, Instagram Livewith the popularity of live streaming ever increasing amongst both children and young people, it's important to understand how it works and the opportunities and risks it presents.

Live streaming brings games and content creators together with their fans – all content is live, 'in the moment': it isn't moderated and it's often unrehearsed. It can be fun for young people, providing many opportunities to develop their creativity and showcase their talents. However, there are also risks associated with live streaming and engaging with other people's broadcasts.

The boundaries between social networking and gaming sites are becoming increasingly blurred. And apps that allow two-way communication and live streaming present particular risks to children of being groomed

Andy Burrows

Head of child safety online policy, NSPCC



eSafe is the only digital monitoring system that can detect risks that are evident in static and moving imagery, even when unaccompanied by metadata.

On live streaming sites, once content is broadcast nobody can watch it again – which can make streamers quite reckless and lead to inappropriate content.

The more serious risks of grooming have been highlighted by recent research:

- An NSPCC survey of 2,000 11-17 year olds found 1 in 25 has received or been asked to send sexual material to an adult online. Extrapolating these figures to the UK population of more than 5,000,000 11-17 year olds, the NSPCC estimates that up to 201,000 are being subject to attempted grooming.
- Research by the IWF found that 98% of live streamed abuse was on largely private platforms, showing children aged 13 and under. The research found that Twitch was one of the most prevalent places where children reported being asked to send explicit material of themselves by adults, along with social media giants Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter.



Thinkuknow provides a package of resources for 8-18 year olds focusing on live streaming and the risks to children and young people.

Find out more at thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/resources/live-streaming

Good to know

- Live streams can be broadcast publicly or privately, in one-on-one chats which cannot be viewed by others.
- Apps and social networks such as Tik Tok, Yubo and Twitch are primarily live streaming platforms, while platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter offer live streaming functionality e.g. Twitter's Periscope.
- Children and young people can live stream anything: from dancing performances to sharing their views about a subject to providing tips and advice to other gamers as they play a particular game.
- Young gamers, in particular, enjoy watching their favourite Youtubers and getting tips and advice on game play. Ninja, alongside the rapper Drake, recently smashed the record for the most simultaneous viewers to a single stream with 635,000 viewers on Twitch. A few weeks later he broke this record, with 667,000 viewers to a stream of him playing at an eSports event in Las Vegas.
- In public live streams, viewers get involved by 'liking' videos and adding comments.
- On some live streaming platforms, viewers can 'gift' live streamers. These 'gifts' can be converted into real money which can be spent online by the streamer.



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eSafe Global Ltd, New Court, Regents Place, Regent Road, Salford M5 4HB. Registered number: 06169753

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