SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Primary | March 2026. In this issue: YouTube safety | The law on AI images

Helping your child use YouTube and YouTube Kids safely

YouTube is hugely popular with children. It can be fun, creative and educational, but like any online space, it isn't risk free. Even apps designed for children, such as YouTube Kids, can sometimes show content that isn't right for younger viewers.

⚠️ **What parents and carers should know about the risks**

Most children start by watching something completely harmless. The risk usually comes from how the platform works, not from what they set out to watch.

Some common ways children can come across unsuitable content include:

- **Autoplay:** one video can quickly lead to another without your child choosing it.

How parents/carers can reduce this risk:

- Turn Autoplay off in settings
- Encourage children to choose videos rather than letting videos be chosen for them
- Check what the next suggested video is if Autoplay is left on
- Use YouTube Kids 'Approved Content Only' mode where possible
- **Search:** children might search for something innocent but get unexpected results

How parents/carers can reduce this risk:

- Turn off search in YouTube Kids
- Sit with children when they are searching, especially younger primary-aged children
- Talk about what to do if they see something confusing or upsetting
- Save or subscribe to trusted channels so children can go straight to safe content
- **Adverts:** young children can struggle to tell the difference between adverts and videos

How parents/carers can reduce this risk:

- Explain simply what an advert is (for example: "This is trying to sell you something")
- Watch together sometimes so you can talk about adverts when they appear
- Consider using YouTube Kids, which usually has fewer and more age-appropriate adverts
- Teach children not to click on adverts or pop-ups without checking with you first

Even YouTube Kids, while safer, is not perfect because content is filtered by systems rather than checked by a person first.

Practical ways TO MAKE YOUTUBE SAFER

Use YouTube Kids where possible

- Set up separate profiles for each child
- Choose an age level
- Turn on 'Approved Content Only'
- Set screen time limits
- Block videos or channels you don't want your child to see

When using normal YouTube, switch on safety settings

- Turn on Restricted Mode
- Use Supervised Accounts to manage what they can access
- Turn Autoplay off
- Check their watch history regularly

Watch together when you can

- Ask what they like watching
- Occasionally watch a video with them
- Keep devices in shared family spaces

Talk about what to do if something feels wrong

- It's never their fault if they see something upsetting
- They can tell you and won't be in trouble
- They can close the video and come and get you

A helpful mindset for parents and carers

It can help to think of YouTube like a busy public place. There are lots of great things there, but children still need guidance, boundaries and support while they learn how to navigate it safely.

You don't have to know everything about technology. Staying curious, setting simple rules, and keeping conversations open are some of the most powerful safety tools you have.

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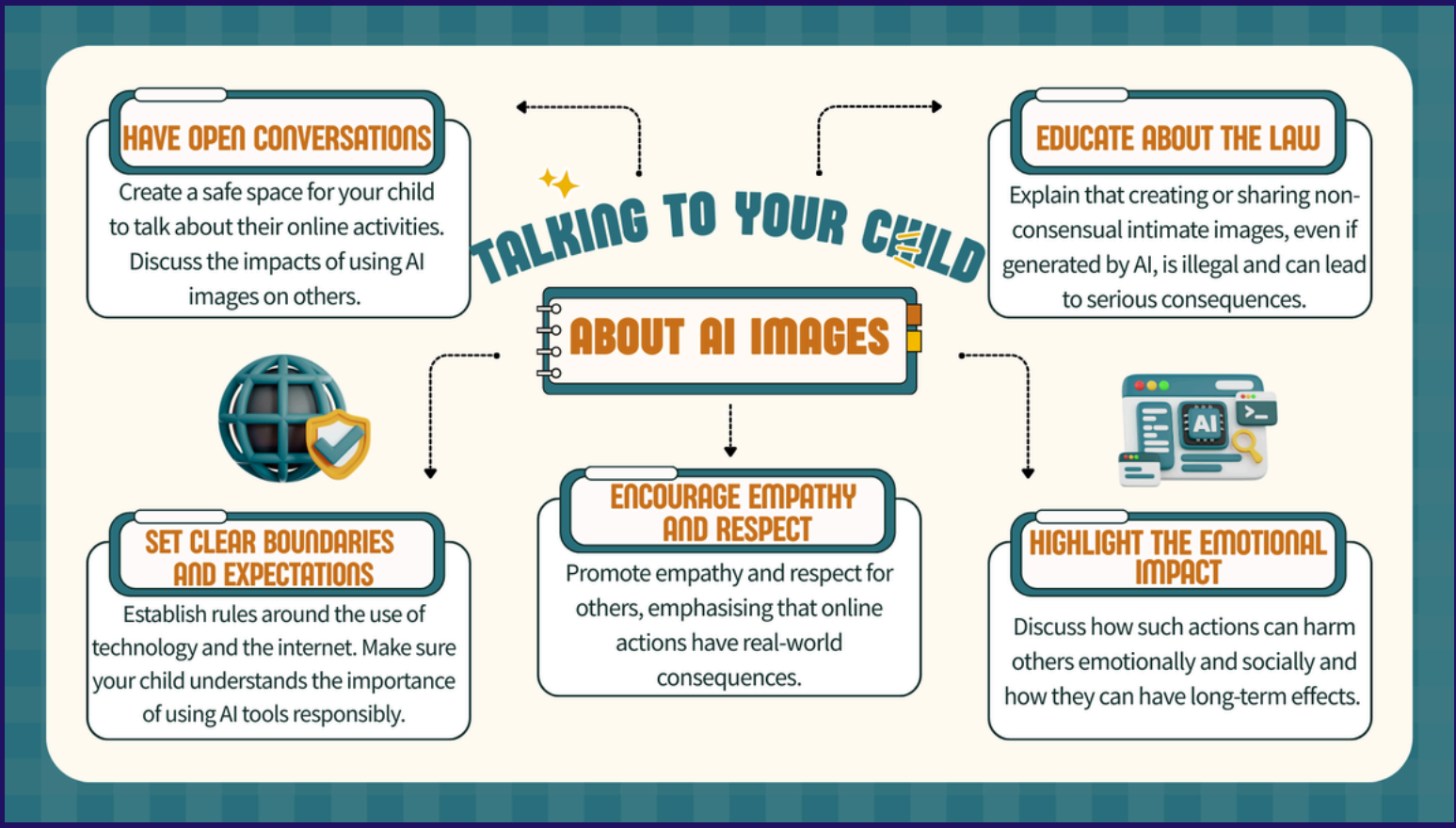
Important update for parents and carers: Understanding AI and the new UK law
Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly become a part of our children's digital playground. From creating imaginative stories to generating funny images, AI tools offer endless possibilities. However, it's crucial to be aware of how innocent fun can sometimes cross into harmful territory.

The appeal of AI for children
Children are naturally curious and love to experiment. AI tools that can transform photos or generate images can be fascinating. They might use these tools to create humorous pictures of themselves or friends, thinking it's all in good fun.

When fun turns harmful
What starts as a joke can quickly escalate. Altering images to make someone look silly can lead to embarrassment or bullying. More concerning is the potential to create or share images that are inappropriate or indecent, even if unintentionally. Such actions can have serious emotional impacts on all involved.

The legal perspective
The UK has stringent laws to protect individuals from the creation and distribution of indecent images, especially involving minors. Even digitally altered images fall under these laws. It's essential to understand that:

- Creating or sharing indecent images of anyone under 18 is illegal, regardless of intent.
- Possessing such images, even if created as a joke, is a criminal offence.
- Encouraging others to create or share these images is also against the law.



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