

Safer Communities have prepared the following guidance in light of current publicity around the “Momo Challenge”.

“Momo” is the latest version of Apps targeting children and young people via social media, encouraging them to add a “Curse Contact (often via messaging services such as WhatsApp or gaming services). Once access is gained, the App then exposes young people to frightening/violent images, and in some instances challenges/pressurises them to self-harm and ultimately commit suicide.

Understandably, the above has caused some concern amongst parents and carers wishing to protect their children from harmful online content. This may lead to increased requests for advice within school/community settings, on reassurance and guidance on how to protect young people from this, and other online threats. The following offers some practical advice:

Advice for parents/carers

Although the Momo challenge appears to be more fear than fact, **as with any Online Safety issue, it’s important that parents/carers talk to their child. The best way to start is to ask a general question about whether they have seen anything online that upsets or worries them.** Explain that there are often things that happen online that can be misleading or frightening, and that some things are designed to attract attention.

Parents should follow their child’s lead - introducing the idea of the Momo challenge to a child who isn’t familiar with it might lead them to investigate. Take your child’s lead, and whether or not you decide to talk openly about Momo, **reinforce key safety messages such as never accepting friend requests from strangers, never provide personal information online (address, school, siblings names etc.) and never feeling pressurised into doing any online that doesn’t feel right!**

Remember that curiosity is a natural part of growing up, don’t blame them for being drawn into the latest digital craze. Try to listen, keep calm and help them recognise that however tempting these things may be to explore, it’s never sensible to be drawn in.

Make sure you discuss online safety regularly, reinforcing that they shouldn’t accept friend requests or try to contact strangers via social media platforms or messaging apps. Ensure their privacy settings are updated, disable location sharing, and most importantly encourage them to talk to a trusted adult if they are troubled by anything they see online.