

## URGENT ONLINE SAFETY – MOMO

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This week, a number of our children have expressed worries and concerns regarding 'Momo'. This is a scary doll-like figure that sends graphic violent images and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges and has been associated with self-harm. Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and come to the attention of schools across the country. It has been dubbed the 'suicide killer game' and is linked to apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and YouTube Kids.

National Online Safety has issued seven useful tips to help anyone who is afraid of what their child might come across. For further support or information:

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/resources/platform-guides/momo-online-safety-guide-for-parents/>

### 1. Tell them it's not real

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them. The Momo figure was originally created as a sculpture and is displayed in an art gallery in Tokyo. Also, tell your child to not go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

### 2. Be present

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online.

This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in.

As the nature of each task become progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

### 3. Talk regularly

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you discuss it with them too.

Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

### 4. Device settings and parental controls

Ensure that you set up parental controls for your devices at home.

This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety.

For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

### 5. Peer pressure

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline.

If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

### 6. Real or hoax

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true.

Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

### 7. Report and block

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material.

People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material.

Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it.