

# Parent Safeguarding Newsletter

December 2023

The streaming Disney + channel is a child friendly and family entertainment platform which provides many hours of entertainment. Over the Christmas period families will be watching movies and programmes which may seem harmless but at the same time can make managing screen time difficult. This can result in binge watching and thus distracting them from homework and socialising as well as impacting sleep patterns and mood changes. Please monitor your children's use of TV or online activity as they still maybe able to access other unsuitable content. See the poster below for further information.

## What Parents & Carers Need to Know about DISNEY+

The Walt Disney Company's streaming service, Disney+ combines entertainment from the famous animation studio itself with Pixar, Star and National Geographic, plus the Marvel and Star Wars franchises. With access to the latest releases, Disney classics and original series, there's plenty of content to explore. While parents may have noted that adverts have now been introduced on some versions of the service, the platform is – unsurprisingly for a Disney product – designed to be appropriate for the whole family.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

**LESS SUITABLE CONTENT**

While Disney+ is predominantly family friendly, there are some movies and shows in its library which are aimed at an older audience: these may scare younger ones or contain themes or language that you'd rather your child wasn't exposed to. You could avoid such situations by enabling Junior Mode (see 'Adjust content settings', below) or specifying a content age rating for your child's profile.

**BINGE WATCHING**

With the option to view content on any internet-enabled device and a growing catalogue of movies, cartoons and documentaries, Disney+ can make managing screen time difficult. This could result in children binge watching content, distracting them from activities like homework or socialising. Too much screen time has also been shown to negatively impact mood, sleep patterns and weight.

**PHISHING EMAILS**

Be especially cautious if you receive emails or text messages purporting to be from Disney+. There have been numerous reports of online scammers impersonating Disney+ staff in an attempt to gain access to subscribers' personal information. Disney+ states it will never email or call customers asking for their payment details, their private information or their password.

### ENCROACHING ADVERTS

Disney+ has introduced a new subscription package – Disney+ Standard with Ads – which plays commercials before movies and during shows (like many TV channels). There are no adverts in Junior Mode, but profiles with a content rating of 8+ years will see ads appropriate for that age category. Adults who give consent will see personalised adverts based on their location and viewing history.

**ACCESSING ADULTS' PROFILES**

If adults don't set a PIN for their profile, children could access it and encounter content which isn't age appropriate. In the settings, Junior Mode has a toggle titled 'Kid-Proof Exit' which requires the user to read four words (numbers, spelled out) and enter them to switch profiles. For older children who can read, though, this isn't secure enough – so using a PIN for adult profiles is recommended.

### Advice for Parents & Carers

#### ADJUST CONTENT SETTINGS

When a cartoon, show or movie finishes, Disney+ uses algorithms to identify content with similar themes, which it thinks your child will also enjoy. This suggestion will then automatically begin to play by default. There's an option to turn off this auto-play function in the profile settings, which will encourage your child to take a break from the screen and move on to a different activity.

#### ADD PIN PROTECTION

Disney+ enables you to effectively lock profiles behind a four-digit PIN. In particular, some of the shows on the platform's Star content hub are far more oriented to adults (including several hard-hitting dramas from US networks), so protecting parents' or older siblings' profiles with a PIN will help to prevent younger children stumbling across material which isn't intended for them.

#### TURN OFF AUTO-PLAY

When a cartoon, show or movie finishes, Disney+ uses algorithms to identify content with similar themes, which it thinks your child will also enjoy. This suggestion will then automatically begin to play by default. There's an option to turn off this auto-play function in the profile settings, which will encourage your child to take a break from screen time and move on to a different activity.

#### ENJOY AS A FAMILY

When your child watches a movie or show on Disney+ for the first time, you may want to sit with them to ensure it's suitable. You could do the same when introducing them to older films that you haven't seen for years: your perception of what's appropriate has very probably changed, and some of the language and attitudes in movies from your own childhood may seem quite shocking today.

## Talking to children about difficult topics

We have all been on the receiving end of a difficult conversation. But that doesn't make it any easier when you have to have one with your child. You might need to have a conversation where you:

- have to break some bad news
- have to ask about something you're worried about
- ask about topics you find uncomfortable - like sex or drugs
- ask your child if they're worried or scared by something
- ask your child about a new behaviour
- or anything else you feel will be difficult to bring up.

Whatever the subject, and however old the child you're talking to, there are lots of ways to make it easier for you both. We have advice to help you decide how to talk to your child in a way that's age-appropriate and supportive. However you know your child best so trust your judgement about what will work for your family best.

The NSPCC link below provides more specific information about starting conversations with children and the importance of listening. At the bottom of the page there are also lists of books that can help with explaining difficult topics for different age groups from young children to teenagers.

[How to talk to children about difficult topics | NSPCC](#)

