

Safeguarding Bulletin

ISSUE 36

Mount Kelly's Safeguarding Bulletin aims to provide parents and carers with the information needed to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with their children about potential risks and issues in the wider world and online. This week's bulletin provides information about horror films and age ratings.

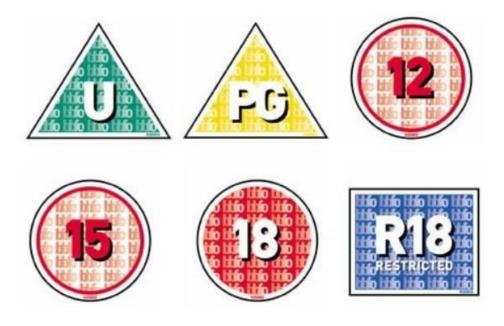
Many children and young people enjoy exploring new and exciting genres and themes in the films and TV they consume – and as they grow, the maturity of this content will likely increase with them. However, without proper supervision and safeguarding, youngsters looking for a new title to enjoy – especially in the horror genre – might get a little more than they're ready for.

The emotional and psychological impacts of viewing age-inappropriate content can be severe. It's vital for parents and educators to know how to keep the children in their care as safe as possible while young people explore new, potentially grittier or darker, pieces of media. This week's **#WakeUpWednesday** guide breaks down the risks of viewing age-inappropriate content, with a particular focus on horror, and offers expert advice on how to limit youngsters' exposure to material that might upset or disturb them.

Further Resources for Parents

The BBFC have also produced:

- a useful <u>parents' guide to age ratings</u>
- a set of bite-size guides about a range of issues to help parents facilitate important conversations



At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about **ORROR FILMS & AGERATINGS**

The 'on-demand' availability of streaming platforms in many homes creates extra possibilities for young viewers to be exposed to age-inappropriate content. Material which features horror or violence can cause anxiety and nightmares for children, especially since it can be hard for young ones to grasp that what they're watching isn't real.

CLASSIFICATION BREAKDOWN

The British Board of Film Classification has the following age ratings:

U: Suitable for all ages

PG: For children aged 8 and above; this content shouldn't unsettle them

12A: Children under the age of 12 should not watch without an adult; this content potentially features bad language, nudity or sexual references

15: Suitable only for 15-year-olds and above

18: Exclusively for an adult audience, with potentially explicit themes of violence, nudity or sex

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

STREAMING IS EVERYWHERE

Modern mobile devices make it very easy for children to watch streamed films without the need of a tV. The availability of inappropriate content has risen significantly on streaming platforms, almost all of which host 18-rated content. If not restricted by parental controls, this could be viewed by children who aren't quite ready for such adult themes, concepts and imagery.

FACT VS. FICTION

Many children have no trouble separating fact from fiction. However, with modern day technology making pretend violence and he look ever more realistic, it's becoming harder for youngsters to tell the difference. For instance consider remakes of older films, where dated special effects (making it easy to discern that something wasn't real) have been replaced by far more convincing monsters and gore

PEER PRESSURE

Friends encouraging each other to watch the latest film featuring violence or horror can lead to childrer consuming content that they're not ready for. As 18+ content is available on many streaming platforms, youngsters can watch these together – potentially without their parents' or carers' knowledge.

CHILDREN SCARE DIFFERENTLY

It can be difficult to decide what content is appropriate for children. What's fine for one child could be extremely frightening for another. As many control of extentions in gine initiation of the content of the content they watch with their parents, encouragi an open dialogue around the kind of media that young people consume can help avoid exposing them to any inappropriate content. ouraging

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS Gar

Horror prides itself on its ability to startle or induce genuine fear in the viewer – so it's no surprise that this genre isn't usually intended for children. A natural side-effect of this is that 'jump scares' or a creepy, suspenseful atmosphere can have lasting effects on younger minds. The resulting anxiety can impact a child's sleeping patterns or eating habits.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WATCH THE FILM FIRST

If you're concerned that a film might be unsuitable for children (whether it's their first dive into the horror genre or a step up in age classification), then take a look for yourself. There's no better way to judge whether this content is something you'd deem appropriate for a child – and if a parent, for example, has actually seen the film (or at least a portion of it), they can construct a far more credible case if they decide it's inappropriate.

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DISCUSS THE CONTENT OF FILMS



If a child has seen a film that you think may have exposed them to potentially uncomfortable themes and ideas, don't shy away from talking about it, and answer any questions they may have. This is especially important if they watched the film without an adult present. Ask them to summarise the story for you, as this will give you an understanding of what they've learned from watching it.

REMEMBER – IT'S NOT REAL

TOO SCARED?

Emphasise to children that the content they're viewing is entirely fictional and has no chance of affecting them in real life. If a child is upset after watching a film, try to understand what exactly has unsettled them: this can help you approach the topic in a healthy and informative manner to dispel any fears or anxieties they may have.

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS



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Most streaming platforms have the option to put age ranges on children's accounts. This means that films and shows that are inappropriate for children won't be advertised while they're browsing and won't even appear if a child specifically searches for them. This can be changed any time at parents' discretion, but it's wise to protect these settings with a password, so a child can't alter anything on their own



John Insley is an assistant principal at a secondary school. He has been Sommissey is an assistant principal at a secondary school, he has been involved with e-safety in schools for over 10 years, writing policies and supporting various schools in developing their e-safety provision. John has introduced a range of strategies at multiple schools aimed at helping parents to better support their child in the ever-changing digital world.

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: https://nationalcollege.com/guides/horror-films-and-age-ratings

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