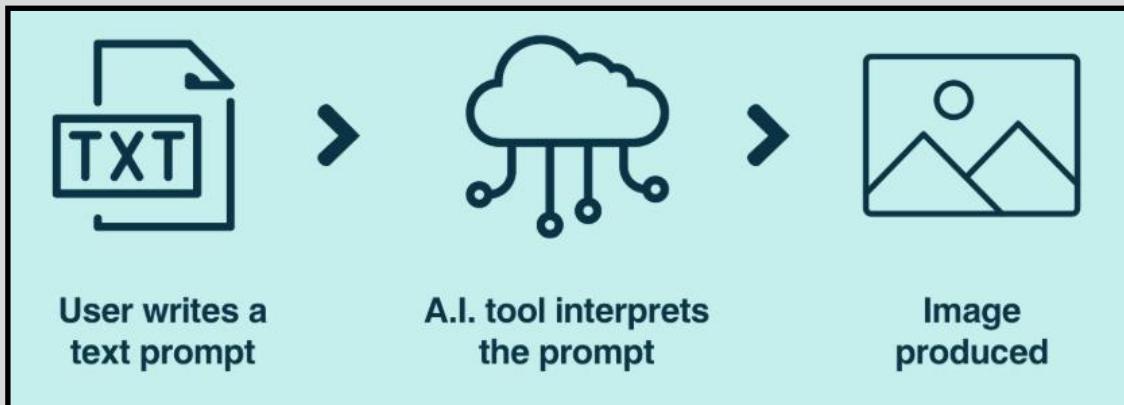


SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This edition of our Safeguarding Newsletter will focus on AI and artificially generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM).



What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial intelligence is the use of computer systems to solve problems and make decisions. It's already part of everyday life e.g. AI is used to give your personalised suggestions on social media, shopping sites or route planning apps.

Generative AI takes a written prompt and runs it through an algorithm to generate new, 'natural'-seeming content. Tools include:

Chatbots such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Grammarly, which generate text

Text-to-image programmes like DALL-E and Midjourney, which create images

Text-to-video programmes, which create videos.

AI technology is developing rapidly, and these tools will only improve over time e.g. they'll be able to create more convincing images and videos.

Many AI tools are free to access, and some can be used to generate inappropriate content.



What are the safeguarding risks to my child?

AI might be involved in:

- ⇒ **Hacking & scams** - text-generation tools can write convincing emails and text messages to trick children into giving people access to their social media or banking accounts
- ⇒ **AI-generated child sexual abuse images** - some text-to-image tools or image-altering apps (often called 'nudifying' apps) could be used to create sexually explicit pictures of children - this might be for sexual gratification or as means of bullying another student
- ⇒ **'Deepfake' pornography** - putting a real person's face into pornographic videos for sexual gratification or to humiliate the person being put in the images. AI technology is used to alter the person's facial expressions to make the video look more convincing
- ⇒ **'Catfishing' and 'sextortion'** - criminals can use AI-generated profile pictures to appear younger than they are to befriend and groom children and young people, and then ask for information and/or images from them (e.g. nude or semi-nude photos). They can then use this to extort the child or young person into giving them money
- ⇒ **Fake news and misinformation** - text-to-image tools can be used to create convincing fake photos of world events, which could be used to promote certain beliefs (including hateful ones)
- ⇒ **AI chatbot relationships** - some AI tools allow children to chat and build a relationship with a fake person. These relationships can become very intense, and the AI may make dangerous or inappropriate suggestions



What is Artificially Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material?

Artificially generated child sexual abuse material describes images of child sexual abuse that are partially or entirely computer-generated. They are usually produced using software which converts a text description into an image. This technology is developing rapidly, the images created can now be very realistic, and recent examples are difficult to differentiate from unaltered photographs.

Many popular, publicly available artificial intelligence tools automatically block attempts to create abusive material, but the large number of child sexual abuse images made using them that have been detected show that individuals have found ways around this. Typically, they are made using publicly available artificial intelligence tools that can be used and manipulated to produce images, (and, increasingly, videos) depicting child sexual abuse.

Some artificially generated child sexual abuse material depicts children who appear to be entirely artificial or fictional, and it is often assumed this means no child has been harmed or affected. But most tools rely on thousands of existing images to inform or 'train' them, so genuine images of individuals are likely to have been used as reference material.

We must remember it is fundamentally harmful to produce any child sexual abuse material, if it features an identifiable victim or not.

Some reports indicate that photographs of child sexual abuse have also been used to 'train' artificial intelligence tools, so children may have been sexually abused to produce these images in the first place.

When images of a child have been shared, there is the potential for the child to be revictimised over and over again, every time an image is watched, sent or received. This impact can persist into adulthood, with victims/survivors reporting that they worry constantly about being recognised by a person who has viewed the material, and some have been recognised in this way.

Is artificially generated child sexual abuse material illegal to create, view and share?

Yes, it is illegal to create, view and share all sexual images of children under-18 produced using artificial intelligence. It is important to remember this applies to all material depicting child sexual abuse – it doesn't matter if the material is created in a 'conventional' way using a camera, or created using artificial intelligence tools.

As a result of the recent rapid growth of artificial intelligence tools, there is some broad confusion about the legality of artificially generated child sexual abuse material. A recent survey by the [Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) found that 40% of respondents either didn't know or thought that this content was legal in the UK.

Not only is it illegal, but law enforcement have warned that the proliferation of these images will [likely make it even harder to identify children at risk of abuse](#). As artificially generated child sexual abuse images have become more realistic, it will likely be more difficult for police forces to be sure if a child is in need of identifying and safeguarding and to undertake that identification process.

How should you respond if you are concerned?

Research tells us that professionals feel less confident responding to child sexual abuse in online contexts because they aren't 'experts' in technology. And when it comes to technology seen as new, complex, or unusual, that concern can be even greater. In reality, the skills professionals should use to respond are the same as in any case of child sexual abuse.

Although you may not be certain about how images have been created, or worry that you don't have specialist knowledge in responding to harm in this context, this shouldn't change the overall protection and support that should be followed for any concern about child sexual abuse.

In all of cases, we recommend you refer concerns to children's social care, and a multi-agency response involving policing colleagues should begin.

All images of child sexual abuse, artificially generated or not, should also be reported to the [Internet Watch Foundation](#).

Signs to look out for.....

If your child is facing a safeguarding issue online, they might:

- Spend more time online, or more time offline
- Be up late online, or complain of being tired because they were online all night
- Receive a lot of messages and notifications on their phone
- Have stronger emotional responses or outbursts when they are online - they may get unusually angry, upset or distant after checking their phone or using their computer/tablet
- Be secretive about their use of the internet or a device - they may refuse to show you their phone or device, or refuse to tell you what they get up to online

What can you do at home.....

We are talking to the students about the risks of AI in school, but this is always more effective if the conversation happens at home, too.

You can help keep your child safe by:

- *Talking about AI* - you can talk about both what it's good for, and where it can be more dangerous
- *Being aware of what they're doing online* - most social media apps have ways for parents/carers to monitor their child's activity
- *Listening to them* if they are telling you anything that is worrying them - don't blame them for anything that's happened

We all have a role in supporting children whose image or likeness features in child sexual abuse images online. Refer concerns to children's social care and/or the police if you're concerned that a child or young person has been or is at risk of immediate harm at any point.

The impact on victims of the circulation of images of sexual abuse of children can be as severe and varied as the abuse itself. In cases where the images are partially or entirely artificially generated, it's important we are there to listen to children and young people, ask them what happened, believe them and tell them how you can help.

Support for children and young people should always respond to their own individual situation and needs, which you can do regardless of the technology used to harm them.

Remember – by identifying child sexual abuse early and providing a supportive response, you can play a role in reducing long-term impacts.