

MOMO Challenge

We would like to draw your attention to the following information which we received from Alan Mackenzie, Esafety advisor #ditto.

“Momo is essentially a hoax, but it is so horrific it's sensationalised by the media and parents are understandably spreading cautionary advice, which unfortunately does nothing more than fuel the hoax further so that it goes round and round in a never-ending spiral, akin to other so-called challenges such as Blue Whale.

Naturally, some children are going to be frightened by what they see, yet this hoax is spreading so far and wide due to the sensationalism that more and more children are seeing it.

If you are asked by parents about this challenge, my advice would be to inform them that it is a hoax. You can find a little more information using the link below and I'll put out some thoughts, advice and guidance next week.

<https://www.thatsnonsense.com/is-the-momo-challenge-real-or-an-online-hoax-fact-check/>

However, please see below the guidance from the Hampshire Police Education Team which was sent to all schools in the area regarding the MOMO Challenge

Dear Schools and Partners

As part of our commitment to working in partnership with schools, partners and parents, I am sending this email out expeditiously to ensure you are aware of an internet ‘suicide-influencing game’ which has come to my attention called The MOMO Challenge which encourages children to harm themselves and is reported to be linked to several deaths around the world and is now appearing across the UK.

Below is a brief summary of what the MOMO Challenge is and we ask that you share this information among your colleague and parent networks.

With no intention to be condescending, given the horrendous nature of the MOMO challenge, I feel it necessary to advise professionals and parents to seriously consider any decision to raise awareness of it to children and young people as a means to safeguard them, unless necessary; as we know, with all good intentions, drawing attention to it may result in them gravitating towards it.

What is the MOMO Challenge?

Mirroring the ‘Blue Whale’ suicide-game of 2017, The MOMO Challenge is targeted at children and young people through social media by people presenting as MOMO, a terrifying

looking doll.

The doll encourages them to add a contact on messaging service WhatsApp from an unknown number, once contact is made, children are subsequently bombarded with terrifying images and messages reportedly ranging from threats and dares which encourage them to self-harm and even commit suicide.

Although known of in other parts of the world since last year, it appears to be making its way across the UK. MOMO has been associated to multiple platforms used by children including **Youtube, Kidstube, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp**.

The Real Motive? Police in Northern Ireland outlined in their statement that they believe the game is being used by hackers seeking and harvesting information, warning that while it is perceived as an horrendous 'suicide game' targeting children, likely to get thousands of hits, it 'misses the bigger picture'. There are now numerous variations and imitators.

NSPCC Response & Advice for Parents: A spokesperson for the NSPCC in Northern Ireland said: "The constantly evolving digital world means a steady influx of new apps and games and can be hard for parents to keep track of. "That's why it's important for parents to talk regularly with children about these apps and games and the potential risks they can be exposed to. "The NSPCC publishes advice and guidance for parents on discussing overall online safety with their children, as well as promoting **Net Aware** - the UK's only parental guide to social media and gaming apps."

Among the most common signs to watch out for include children who:

- **Become very secretive, especially about what they are doing online**
- **Are spending a lot of time on the internet and social media**
- **Are switching screens on their device when approached**
- **Are withdrawn or angry after using the internet or sending text messages**
- **Have lots of new phone numbers or email addresses on their devices**

If adults are concerned or have any questions on how to approach the subject with their children, they can contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or **visit the NSPCC website**. Children who are worried about their activity on apps or online games can **contact Childline 24 hours a day**, online and over the phone on 0800 1111.