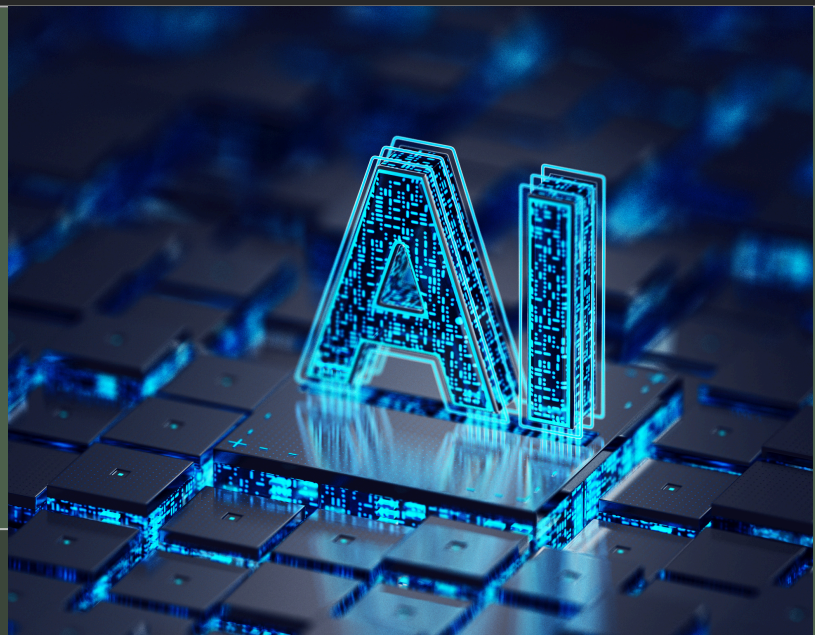# SAFE & SOUND

Welcome to Best Foot Forward's safeguarding newsletter, bringing you the latest insights on current safeguarding topics and educational legislation. Let's take a look at what's new and unfolding in this constantly changing landscape!

AI & CHILD PROTECTION

As AI continues to advance at speed, the law must evolve alongside it to address emerging harms, including AI-generated child abuse.

This article (pg. 2.) examines new protections designed to assess and test AI models for child safety risks, ensuring that technology is developed and deployed with robust safeguards in place.

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PROTECTING CHILDREN IN THE ONLINE AGE

From social media to gaming apps, children are increasingly at risk online—here's how adults can protect them.

LEARN MORE ON PAGE 3

tackling AI ABUSE

Reports of AI-generated child abuse material have more than doubled, highlighting the urgent need for stronger protections at source. As a result, new legislation requires government, AI developers and child protection organisations to work together to ensure AI models cannot be misused to create synthetic child sexual abuse imagery.

Under the new legislation, the Technology Secretary and Home Secretary will be given powers to designate AI developers and child protection charities as authorised testers. This will enable them to assess AI systems for potential misuse and ensure that robust safeguards are in place to prevent the creation of synthetic child sexual abuse imagery

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has reported a sharp rise in AI-generated child sexual abuse material, with cases more than doubling in the past year—from 199 in 2024 to 426 in 2025.

It is essential that children are better protected from becoming victims of harmful deepfakes, and the government's introduction of new laws is a crucial step in countering the AI-driven creation and exploitation of child sexual abuse material.

There has also been a deeply disturbing rise in imagery involving infants, with reports relating to children aged 0–2 increasing from 5 cases in 2024 to 92 in 2025.

What the New Law Does

- Government introduces world-first safety testing powers.
- Technology & Home Secretaries can designate:
  - AI developers
  - Child protection organisations (e.g., IWF)
  - as authorised AI safety testers.
- These groups can legally test AI models to ensure they:
  - Cannot be misused to create synthetic child abuse material
  - Include built-in protections against extreme content and non-consensual imagery

Why This Is Needed

- Current laws make testing risky — developers could accidentally break the law when assessing model safety.
- Offenders are increasingly using AI to:
  - Produce photorealistic deepfakes of real children
  - Circumvent existing platform safeguards
- New powers ensure risks are addressed at the source, not after harm occurs.

"Safety needs to be baked into new technology by design."

IWF Chief Executive Kerry Smith:

KIDS SAFETY online

Understanding Online Safety

- Online safety refers to protecting children and young people from risks associated with digital technologies (NSPCC, 2019).
- Children access the internet via smartphones, tablets, and computers, engaging with social media, online games, messaging apps, and websites (Jang & Ko, 2023; UNICEF, 2024).

Risks Children Face Online

- Children are never to blame for online abuse.
- Vulnerabilities include:
  - Open, publicly accessible platforms (social media, games, messaging apps)
  - The dark web
  - External factors such as social norms, lack of supervision, and unsafe platform design
- Children may also encounter graphic sexual content and pornography at younger ages
- Research shows risks evolve every year as offenders develop new methods (National Crime Agency, 2023).

Supporting Online Safety

- Active parental engagement (open communication, parental controls) helps protect children online (Helsper, Veltri & Livingstone, 2024).
- Teachers can engage children through interactive, peer-based learning, discussions, and video content (Galindo-Dominguez et al., 2024).
- Many schools in England lack comprehensive online safety education (Phippen, 2024).
- Children's voices are essential in designing and implementing online safety initiatives, as their lived experience offers crucial insights.

Principles for Safe Practice

- The Together for Childhood initiatives are grounded in six design principles:
  a. Working in Partnership
  b. Inclusivity & Accessibility
  c. Co-production
  d. Strengths-based approaches
  e. Continuous Learning
  f. Sustainability

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/our-services/together-for-childhood/?utm_old=tfc