

The MOMO challenge

Information for schools

What it is

Often referred to as a “suicide challenge”, Momo is a new viral game that encourages players to perform a series of challenges in order to meet ‘Mother Bird’ - a disfigured character (inspired by Japanese art) with bulging eyes and untidy black hair on a bird-like body.

Light-hearted and fun at the outset, this game experience quickly darkens, absorbing players who are encouraged to perform acts of violence and self-harm through a series of progressively risky challenges. Originating in Mexico, it is easily accessed through social media shares (predominantly Facebook and YouTube) and is rapidly spreading across the world.

Why schools should consider raising awareness of e-safety

The challenges issued in this game present a risk to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people, as does the distressing content when a player refuses to carry on.

With worrying similarities to the ‘Blue Whale challenge’, it has also been linked to a very small number of instances of harm around the world.

How it works

- Players are encouraged to contact Momo and provide their mobile number.
- They will then receive instructions to perform a series of challenges, via SMS or Whatsapp.
- Player refusal can trigger severely abusive messaging and their mobile device being hacked.
- The final challenge is to commit suicide in order to meet ‘Mother Bird’.

Why children and young people like it

Sharing and commentary on social media platforms has created a level of intrigue and curiosity about this game, which is initially light hearted and fun.

Fundamentally, however, this is a game that targets vulnerable children and young people online, as those with mental health issues are more likely to be drawn to the psychological nature of the challenges.

What to do

A person doesn’t have to be searching for Momo themselves to be exposed to it and, unlike other games that children enjoy, there are no positive rewards.

Teachers and parents should educate/reinforce online safety, and in this way encourage children and young people to make the right choice and avoid games such as this by:

- reinforcing the importance of confidently saying “no” to invitations to play games from strangers
- educating pupils as to why they should not click on unidentified links
- reminding school communities how to block and report unknown numbers friend requests and invitations.

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