



## Developing Together for Tomorrow's World

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

Due to the popularity of Netflix's most recent viral show, *Squid Game*, there have been several questions asked by concerned parents, carers, and teachers. The below summarises some of the risks and concerns.

### What is Squid Game?

Squid Game is a South Korean television series streaming on Netflix. The plot centres on a group of adult debtors, thieves, and gamblers competing against each other in a series of childhood games for a grand cash prize. However, there is a dark twist to the game i.e. losing competitors are violently killed. Since its release in September 2021, Squid Game has become number one across 90 different countries in Netflix's ranking of most watched TV shows, this includes the UK.

### Harmful Content in the Show

The visual imagery of Squid Game, especially in promotional images and material, appears innocent and childlike. Currently, Squid Game has a rating of 15+ as the visual content includes high levels of violence and death. It also has graphic depictions of suicide, murder, and sexual assault. Children and young people are likely to know about Squid Game via word of mouth and/or social media / gaming platforms. They may be unaware of the extent of the violence that the show contains.

### How does my child know about this?

As this is a cultural phenomenon, Squid Game has become a popular subject of memes, games, and online conversation. It is entirely possible for a child or young person to know all about Squid Game – without actually watching the show. Popular gaming platforms such as Roblox and Fortnite have also seen a sharp increase in user-designed games recreating those in Squid Game. These can be played by anyone. They are also being heavily livestreamed by many gaming streamers on YouTube and Twitch. Parents and carers should be aware that video content from this show is found extensively on TikTok, which could also increase interest in watching the show. Remember: even if you restrict the child in your care from watching Squid Game, they may be able to access content on other platforms.

### The Risks of Recreation

Due to the overwhelming popularity of Squid Game and its challenge-based plot, many of the themes within the show have become popular on social media platforms. Depictions of these games have started to become popular.

The most popular are:

**Red Light, Green Light:** Players attempt to reach a spot in the allotted time in a stop-start fashion. A particular image being recreated from the show involves the giant doll-like robot that runs this game and monitors any movement.

**Honeycomb Game:** Players must cut out one of four shapes in a thin disc of honeycomb using a needle without breaking the shape. This has become popular on TikTok.

It's unlikely that children would have the means to entirely recreate the games featured in the show in real life. A lot of them include specialised weapons, sets, and equipment. However, there is a concern that a child or young person may unintentionally put themselves in harm's way by trying to recreate a small portion of the games. Some reports have seen children **using physical violence in the playground to 'punish' losers as a substitute for the player losing their life**. If a child attempts to recreate the Honeycomb Game, there is a **risk of burns from caramelised sugar if they attempt to make the honeycomb themselves**. Some users have also **tried heating sharp objects over flames** like characters in the show to make cutting an image out of honeycomb easier.

### Practical Tips and Guidance

**Pause – Consider the age and ability of your child alongside the platform they use**

**Think – Consider talking to your child about harmful content online**

**Talk – Engage your child in a natural way and ask questions to establish how much they know about the topic**

**It's best not to approach the subject directly. This will avoid introducing them to something they may not know about.**

If you notice a child in your care is recreating one of the games found in Squid Game or if they mention it to you, it is important not to assume they have watched the show. Ask them what they know about Squid Game and how they heard about it. Ensure that children and young people in your care know who they can talk to if they come across something that upsets or distresses them online.

For further advice regarding online safety please visit: [www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe). Please also refer to the document that provides details regarding Netflix security controls.

Yours sincerely



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