

Protecting Children Online - Capture, who's looking after the children? FT Film Standpoint

Please see below the letter written by Amanda and Stuart Stephens to the Editor of the Financial Times (FT).

The letter refers to the FT's Standpoint film, "Capture, who's looking after the children?" (YouTube link to the film below.) A short 15 minute drama, with well-known actors, is a hard hitting, and thought provoking film. It demonstrates to parents and carers the potential online harm our children are exposed to in this digital age. Amanda and Stuart would like as many parents and carers to see this film in the hope that it will spread awareness and start conversations.

As the film states:

"There are fewer regulations protecting children online than there are for the sale of eggs"
"More children than ever are experiencing harm online – yet social media platforms remain largely unregulated and unaccountable"

Source: FT research

We appreciate that you are very busy but please do watch the film and please share the film with your school community. We are aware that many schools and colleges in Reading already provide online safety information for students, parents and carers. Online safety and protecting children from online harm is extremely important, it is essential to safeguard our children both at home and at school.

The Editor, Financial Times

Your FT Standpoint film "Capture, who's looking after the children?" provides a hard-hitting, terrifying, all too accurate, but a much needed and urgent window into the importance of regulation to protect children online.

A little over two years ago, our 13-year old son Olly was murdered after a plot was hatched on social media platforms by a number of perpetrators. Both of the 13 and 14-year old perpetrators responsible for stabbing Olly have since been found to have regularly watched and shared online content about knives and knife crime across 11 social media platforms - none of which was challenged given their ages.

We have subsequently campaigned, with the unending support of our MP Matt Rodda, for the Online Safety Bill not to be watered down or delayed any further. The Bill is the opportunity to protect the next generation of children and families from the type of harm Olly and consequently our family, friends and community have suffered. These platforms need to be held to account for the content that they inappropriately put in front of children without a duty of care.

Having been brought together by Baroness Beeban Kidron, 5Rights and the NSPCC, we have formed Bereaved Families for Online Safety with four other bereaved parents. We will continue to encourage all parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles not to take their young person's online safety for granted or stay silent – write to your MP, share your stories with the media, watch "Panorama, A Social Media Murder: Olly's Story", watch "Capture, who's looking after the children?" – as we found out, silence kills.

As a society we need to face up to the irreparable damage and potentially catastrophic consequences that allowing unregulated access to harmful content can do to future generations. Only by enacting law that puts a share of the responsibility for controlling access on these social media platforms will we create a safe environment for children online and stop them being desensitised to content they are not equipped to see.

Amanda and Stuart Stephens, Emmer Green, Reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UY2HOpuTlk>



[Capture, who's looking after the children? | FT Film Standpoint](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UY2HOpuTlk)

An FT drama starring Jodie Whittaker (Dr Who), Paul Ready (Motherland), Shaniqua Okwok (It's a Sin), looks at online harm, regulation and responsibility. The search for their missing son leads a mother and father to a tech company, and a digital gatekeeper who seems to have all the answers. #onlinesafety #childsafety #childsafetyonline #anxiety ...

www.youtube.com

We have realised since the making of the BBC Panorama programme - A Social Media Murder: Olly's Story, that our children often keep their worlds very private and do not speak up when they are worried. Parents and carers only see what we see, but our children see a whole different life through their phones.

Please also watch the BBC Panorama programme, if you haven't already, and feel free to share this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0018kg6>



[Panorama - A Social Media Murder: Olly's Story](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0018kg6)

Marianna Spring looks into the murder of teenager Olly Stephens after an online dispute.

www.bbc.co.uk

Thank you.

Amanda and Stuart Stephens