

⚠ Safeguarding Alert ⚠

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Viral Rumours



Yesterday, **Newsweek** reported that **TikTok users** were warning each other that a group of men had designated the **24th of April** as a **national day of carrying out rape and sexual assault**.

Our **online experts** have had an in-depth look at these rumours and found no contemporary evidence to support them. However, a significant number of videos, warnings and commentary has been posted in response to the rumours.

It's important for you and your parents and carers to have an understanding of the following issues to help protect your children and young people – **See below to read the full blog:**

Safeguarding Alert - Viral Rumour

Yesterday, **Newsweek** reported that **TikTok users** were warning each other that a group of men had been discussing the **24th of April** as a **national day of carrying out rape and sexual assault**.

This worrying online trend was reportedly started by a group of up to six men who claimed that all sexual assault was legal on this day, while encouraging their followers to commit these crimes.

Several other news outlets have begun to report on the story and many TikTok users have responded by producing videos to warn and advise others to be vigilant on the day.

We had an in-depth look at these rumours and found no contemporary evidence to support them. What we did find, however, was a significant number of videos, warnings and commentary being posted in response to the rumours.



TikTok says they have not found any evidence of videos promoting a 'national rape day' and have issued the following statement:

*"While we have **not found evidence** on our platform of any videos related to this subject, our safety team is remaining vigilant, and we will remove content that violates our policies."*

As experts on the online environment, we know that online chatter can feed these rumours and enhance their viral distribution.

Given the fact that young people may hear this rumour and not know whether it is true, we think it's important that parents, carers and safeguarding professionals understand the following issues.

- › At this point, there is no evidence to support this rumour.
- › However, you should also be aware that these types of viral rumours may in some cases incite inappropriate behaviour, pranks and the spreading of further false information.
- › Some posts have encouraged people to carry 'weapons' to protect themselves. If you hear discussions of this you should reaffirm that children should never carry weapons. This could put children at risk of prosecution. Carrying an offensive weapon is a serious crime and one in which the burden of proof switches to the person in possession of the weapon.

Our Advice

- Try to avoid sharing any stories on social media related to this trend. This can create more panic and concern.
- If the children in your care mention this issue, you should use the opportunity to talk to them about the nature of online rumours and how they can block and report any content they find distressing.
- If children describe fear and anxiety, you should discuss a safety plan, which includes:
 - Sticking to busy well-lit areas
 - Staying in the company of a friend/s
 - Arranging a lift with parents or carers or a pre-planned taxi from a reputable firm.
- You could recommend that they share their location on their phone with their parent or carer so they can be tracked on their way home.
- Ask them if they know the safe places in the area they are going to. These places can include police stations, hospitals, and shops where they could easily ask an adult for help.

- › Reinforce the danger of using alcohol or other drugs and advise that that if they ever feel in danger, they should call 999.
- ›
- › Discussions around viral rumours are common - for more information on reporting, blocking or configuring safety settings on TikTok and a range of other apps and platforms, use [Our Online Safety Centre](#). Download our [guide](#) on staying safe on TikTok.



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