

CLEVER NEVER GOES FEATURED ON BBC 'WORLD HACKS'

Today sees the release of the BBC World Hacks episode "*Time to Update the Stranger Danger message?*" which features Action Against Abduction's [Clever Never Goes](#) programme.

[BBC World Hacks](#) is an online series profiling 'brilliant solutions to the world's problems'. The programme features interviews with charity representatives, teachers, parents, police and an academic to highlight the need for a new approach to keeping our child safe outside.

What is Clever Never Goes?

Clever Never Goes is a new child safety programme for use in school, at home and as part of activities such as scouts. The programme is intended to replace the out-dated 'stranger danger' approach – which both fails to keep children safe and creates fear and mistrust.

Clever Never Goes is a fun, engaging and positive way of teaching children to be cautious about specific situations, rather than to fear the worst of everyone they don't know. The programme moves the focus away from strangers and instead teaches children to recognise when someone (anyone) is asking them to go with them.

Clever Never Goes uses a mascot – Clever the robot – who has a number of features to help children explore their own thinking about what is safe and not safe, and understand what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Resources are available – free of charge – online (www.clevernevergoes.org) for schools and parents.

What is 'Stranger Danger'?

'Stranger danger' initiatives began in the early 1970s when the Central Office of Information (a then UK government department) released "Never Go With Strangers" (1971). Two years later one of the "Charlie Says..." programmes dealt with "Strangers" (1973). In 1981 the Central Office of Information issued a new film called "Say No To Strangers".

The 1971 and 1981 films were each over 15 minutes long and featured dramatic recreations of children being approached and lured into cars. The central message for children was not to go with, talk to, or take things from

strangers. The tone was stark. The 1981 film concludes with the narrator warning children "Take care. You don't want to end up dead or in hospital. You know what to do. Say no to strangers".

Whilst the stranger danger approach has long attracted criticism it continues to be used in schools and homes (because no alternative has been developed, until now). Many police forces carry stranger danger resources, for example Greater Manchester Police issued a [60 second stranger danger video](#) in 2015. A [report by the Children's Commissioner \(2017\)](#) found that 90 per cent of primary schools are still delivering some form of stranger danger message to their children. We believe this urgently needs to change.

What's wrong with 'Stranger Danger'?

Action Against Abduction's 2014 research paper, '[Beyond Stranger Danger](#)', reviewed the international literature and identified several problems with the traditional 'Stranger Danger' approach:

- Most strangers will not harm children. Conversely, many people that do harm children are known to their victims. Focusing attention on the threat from strangers can detract from the greater danger posed by someone known to children.
- Psychological studies have demonstrated that children of all ages struggle to distinguish a stranger from a non-stranger. Young children often think 'nice-looking' or 'kind-sounding' people are not strangers. Conversely, strangers are often perceived to all be 'mean-looking'.
- Adults are often not consistent in applying rules not to talk to, or take things from, strangers.
- Teaching children to be wary of strangers can inhibit them from seeking help if they are lost or in distress.

Telling children that all strangers are a potential source of danger does not keep them safe. Worse still it creates a climate of fear and suspicion.

In the early 1970s it was commonplace for young children to be allowed outside alone – simply to play, meet friends, run errands etc. Since then children's independent mobility has plummeted, and with it has come a rise in obesity, and concern that children are not developing important social and practical skills.

A recent survey of 3,000 parents by Families Online found that the single largest concern of parents struggling to 'let go' of children is "stranger danger and abduction". Given many parents themselves were taught about "stranger danger" it is hardly surprising that many are now reluctant to let their own children venture into the outdoor world. We urgently need to break this cycle with a new narrative that keeps children safe but gives them confidence – rather than fear.

How was Clever Never Goes developed?

Clever Never Goes was developed by the UK charity Action Against Abduction working together with Crofton Hammond Infant School in Stubbington, Hampshire and the London-based design agency Cubo.

Following initial development and testing in Crofton Hammond Infant School, Clever Never Goes was piloted in seven primary schools, involving over 350 children of mixed abilities and ages. Tests showed a marked improvement in children's ability to recognise a dangerous situation following the Clever Never Goes lesson.

The programme was launched in July 2018. Since the launch, Clever Never Goes has been endorsed by:

- Hampshire Constabulary
- Hampshire Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board
- Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board, and
- the Home Office.

To date, more than 170 schools have registered for the Clever Never Goes schools resources. Whilst many are from the Hampshire region where the programme was developed the resources are freely available to schools across the UK.

What resources are available for schools?

Schools across the UK can sign up to receive the Clever Never Goes resources at www.clevernevergoes.org. The Schools Pack consists of teacher's guidance pack with two lesson plans and activities for Key Stage 1 and early Key Stage 2 children; a set of classroom slides; and a series of short 'Go Spotting' practice films.

These films feature different interactions between children and adults (some safe and some un-safe) giving children chance to practice 'Go Spotting' (spotting when someone is asking a child to go with them), and teachers the chance to make sure their pupils have understood the Clever Never Goes message.

What resources are available for parents?

It's important that children are told about Clever Never Goes at home as well as in school. Parents can download a Clever Never Goes home pack with information and activities. They can also access our online 'Go Spotting' comic strips– a series of four adult/child interactions to get children practising what they've learnt.

Latest police-recorded child abduction offences

Each year Action Against Abduction collects information on police-recorded child abduction and kidnapping offences (via Freedom of Information requests).

The number of non-parental child abductions has more than doubled from 399 offences in 2013/14 to 870 in 2016/17. Non-parental child abductions include offences perpetrated by strangers (the majority being attempted rather than completed abductions) and by people known but not related to children (for example as a result of grooming and sexual exploitation). Further information is available at: <http://www.actionagainstabduction.org/about-abduction/publications/>

Quotes from people involved with Clever Never Goes

Geoff Newiss, Director of Action Against Abduction:

“Teaching children simply to avoid strangers doesn’t work. Most strangers will help rather than harm children. Conversely, it is often people known to children that pose the greatest threat.”

“Clever Never Goes moves the focus away from strangers and instead teaches children to recognise when someone (anyone) is asking them to go with them. We want to give children practical safety skills which they can use as they get older and become more independent.”

Hampshire Constabulary Chief Constable Olivia Pinkney:

“It’s tremendous that parents and teachers now have access to the new Clever Never Goes programme. Whilst incidents of completed child abductions are relatively uncommon it’s important that we give children the best tools to recognise danger in a way that is balanced and positive”.

Jacky Halton, Head Teacher at Crofton Hammond Infant School, Stubbington,
who has since become a trustee of the charity:

“Telling children about ‘stranger danger’ is hopelessly out-of-date. We’re proud to have created a new approach that helps to build children’s confidence – rather than make the outside world seem frightening.”

For interviews

Please contact Geoff Newiss (Director, Action Against Abduction)

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Images available:

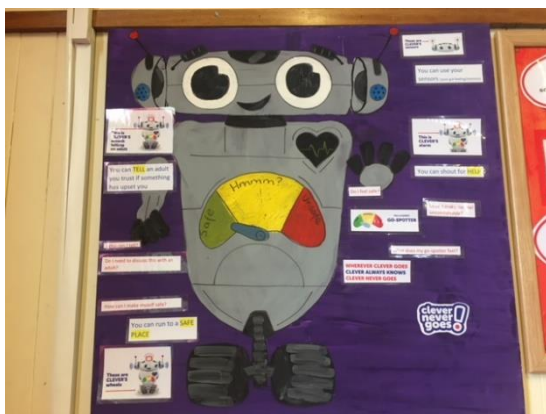
Clever Never Goes logo:



Clever the robot:



Classroom display:



Credit: courtesy Crofton Hammond Junior School, Hampshire.

Child walking to school:



Images of Geoff Newiss (Director, Action Against Abduction) and Jacky Halton Head Teacher at Crofton Hammond Infant School, Stubbington, Hampshire and Director, Action Against Abduction – available on request.