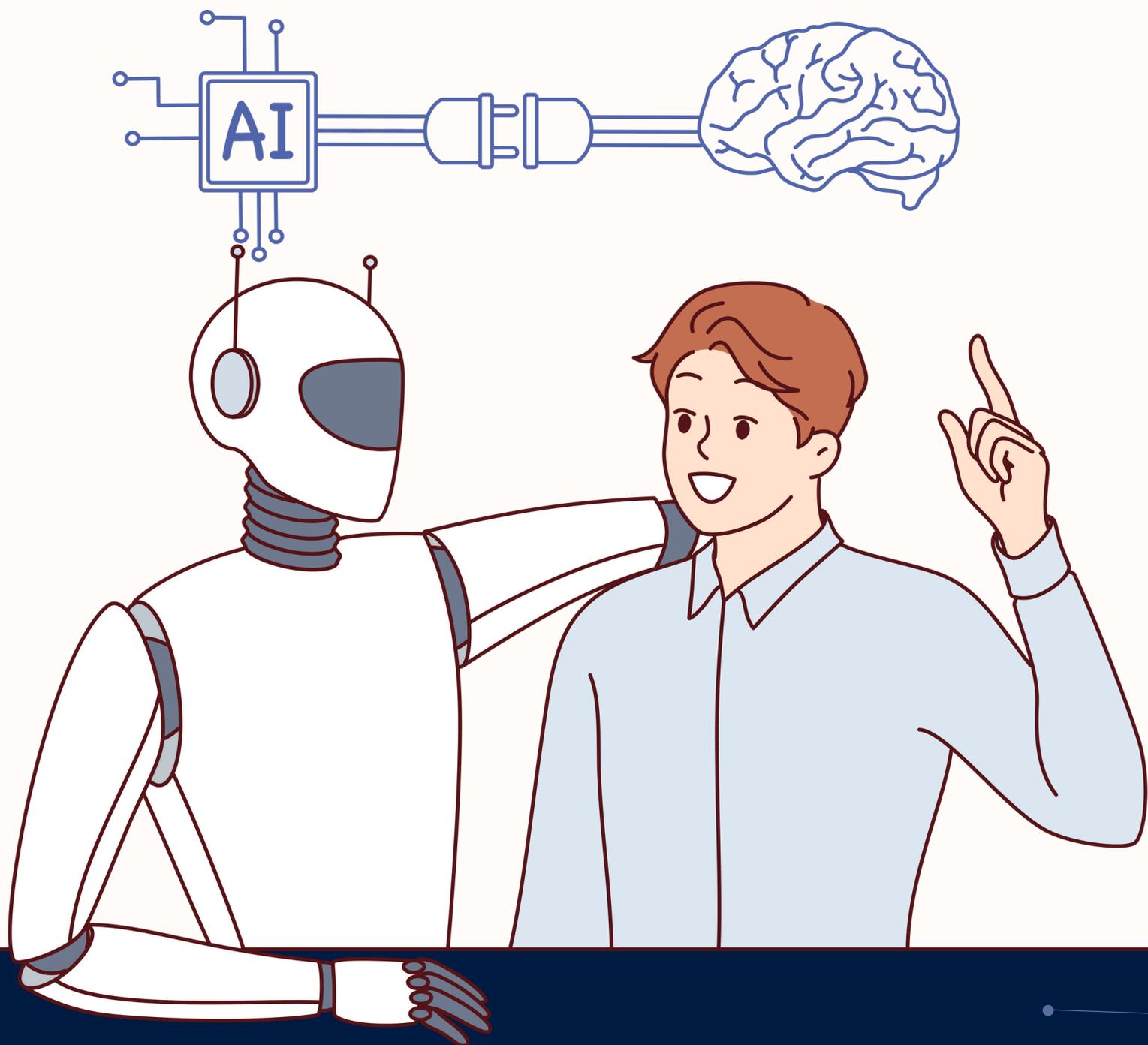
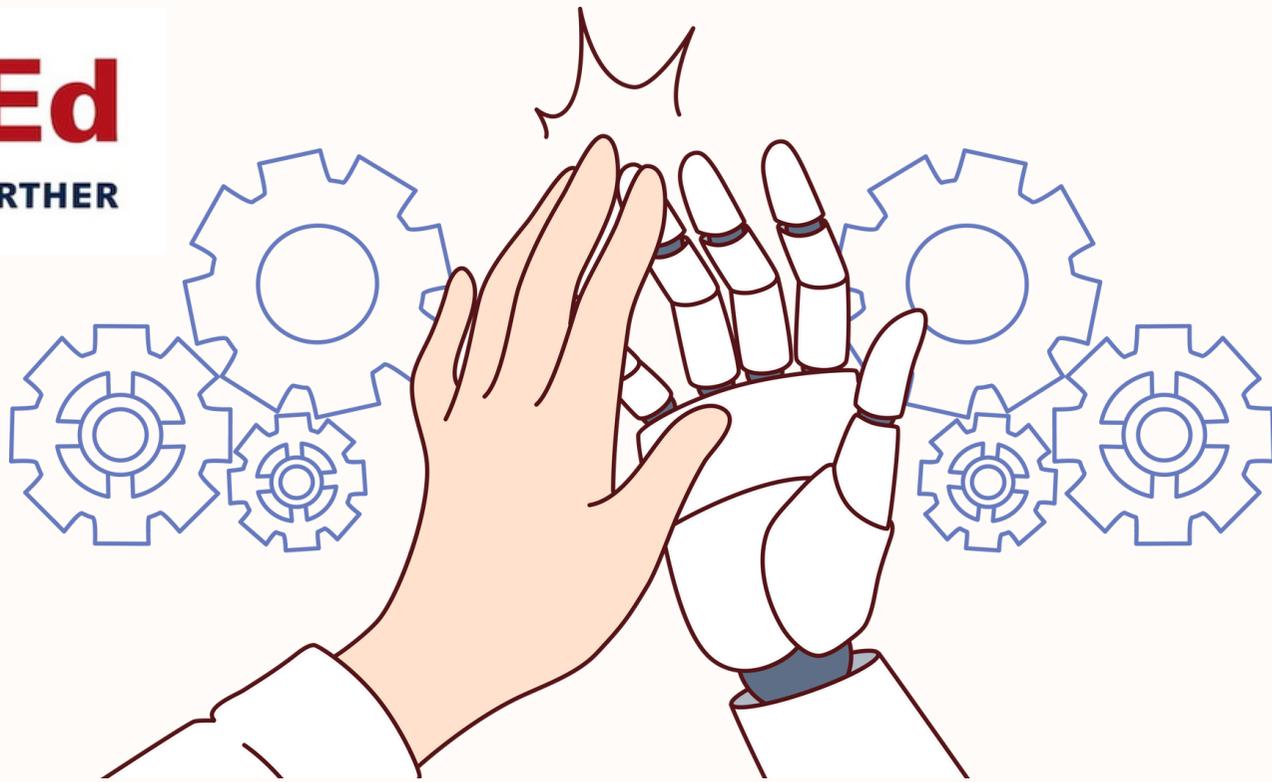


AI AND FAKE MEDIA

*WHAT EVERY PARENT & TEACHER SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT THE NEW ONLINE WORLD*





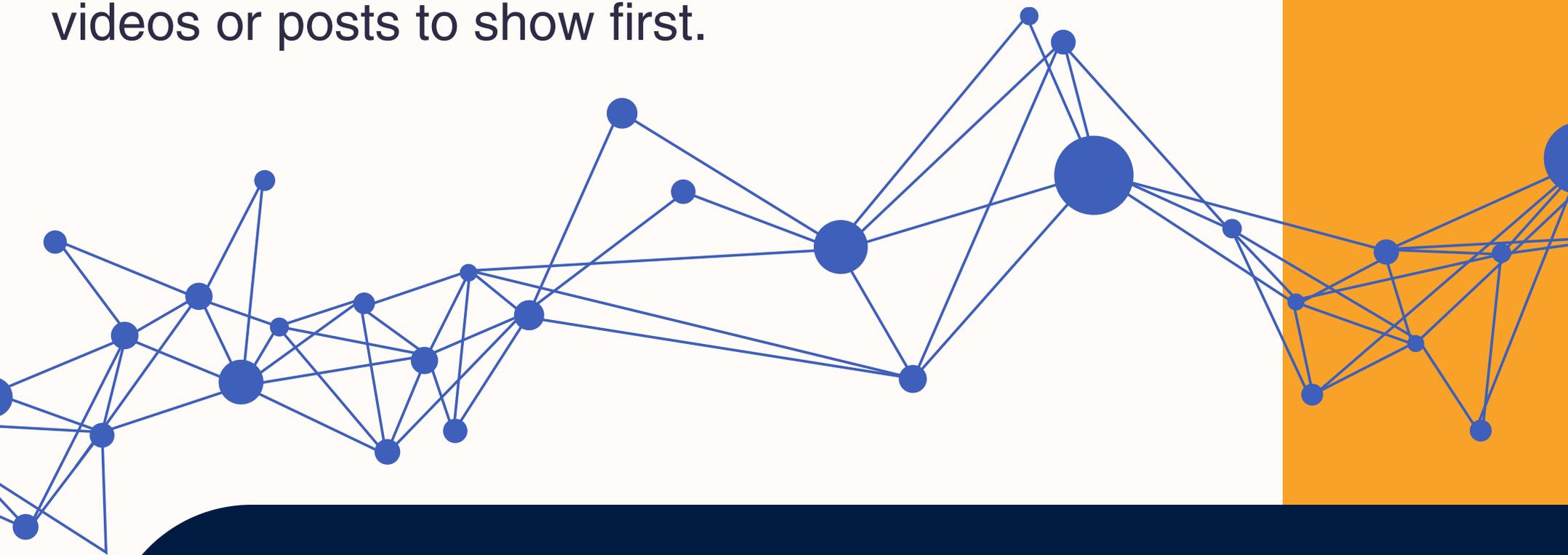
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming how young people learn, communicate and create. Whether its using chatbots to answer homework questions or AI powered apps to edit photos in seconds. AI is now woven into the digital spaces children use every day, but alongside these innovations lie serious risks. In a world of fake unreliable content, LawEd is a source where young people can listen to real life scenarios facilitated by legal experts in a terminology jargon free manner.

WHAT IS AI?

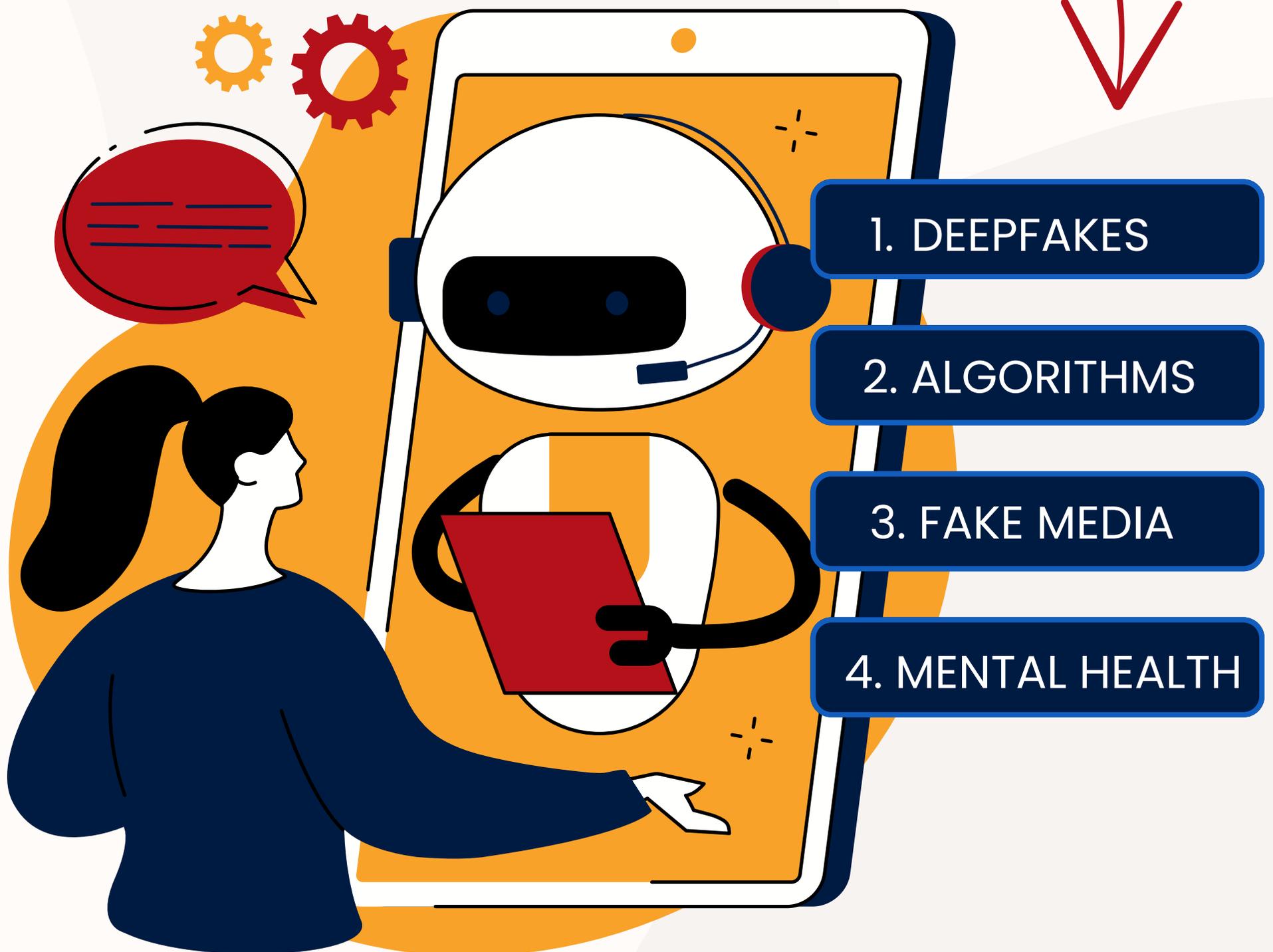
AI refers to computer systems that can think, learn and make decisions. It powers many of the tools young people use every day.

In simple terms, AI learns from data. It studies patterns in behaviour, what we click on, how long we look at a post, which videos we replay, and uses this information to predict what we might like next. That's how social media apps decide which videos or posts to show first.



While this can make content feel more relevant and personal, it also means AI has enormous influence over what young people see and believe online.

THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF AI





1. DEEPFAKES

AI can now generate extremely realistic photos, videos and voices of both real people and individuals who don't actually exist. These are known as deepfakes, which are one of the most concerning developments in digital technology.

While some may seem harmless or entertaining, deepfakes are increasingly being used in damaging ways, such as to spread lies, bully, or create fake sexual images of real people.

Young people have already been targeted with deepfake images of themselves, shared among peers and across social media, causing significant emotional harm. Once such content appears online, it's nearly impossible to fully erase.



DID YOU KNOW ?

You need as few as
5 to 10 images for a single **AI
deepfake** image of a person



AI-GENERATED ⚠️

CATHERINE CONNOLLY

In the lead-up to the Irish presidential election, a deepfake video of candidate Catherine Connolly began spreading online. The video was posted on social media posing as a legitimate news outlet. In it, Connolly appeared to say that she was withdrawing from the race, but this was completely false.

The clip was made using artificial intelligence (AI) to copy her voice and facial movements. It spread rapidly on social media before being removed. Connolly described the video as a “disgraceful attempt to mislead voters and undermine democracy” and reported it to the Electoral Commission of Ireland.

The incident demonstrated how convincing this technology has become, and why many are calling for stronger legal protections.

THE GAP IN IRISH LAW

The **EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act)** now requires that AI-generated content, such as deepfakes, must be clearly labelled to show it isn't real. However, Ireland still needs to go further to address the harmful use of deepfakes. Existing national laws such as harassment, defamation, and data protection weren't written with AI-generated content in mind, so they don't fully cover the misuse of a person's likeness or voice created by artificial intelligence.

In response, the government has introduced the **Protection of Voice and Image Bill 2025**. This Bill intends to set out a specific individual offence where somebody knowingly exploits a person's name, image, voice or likeness without that person's consent with the intention to deceive or to cause harm.

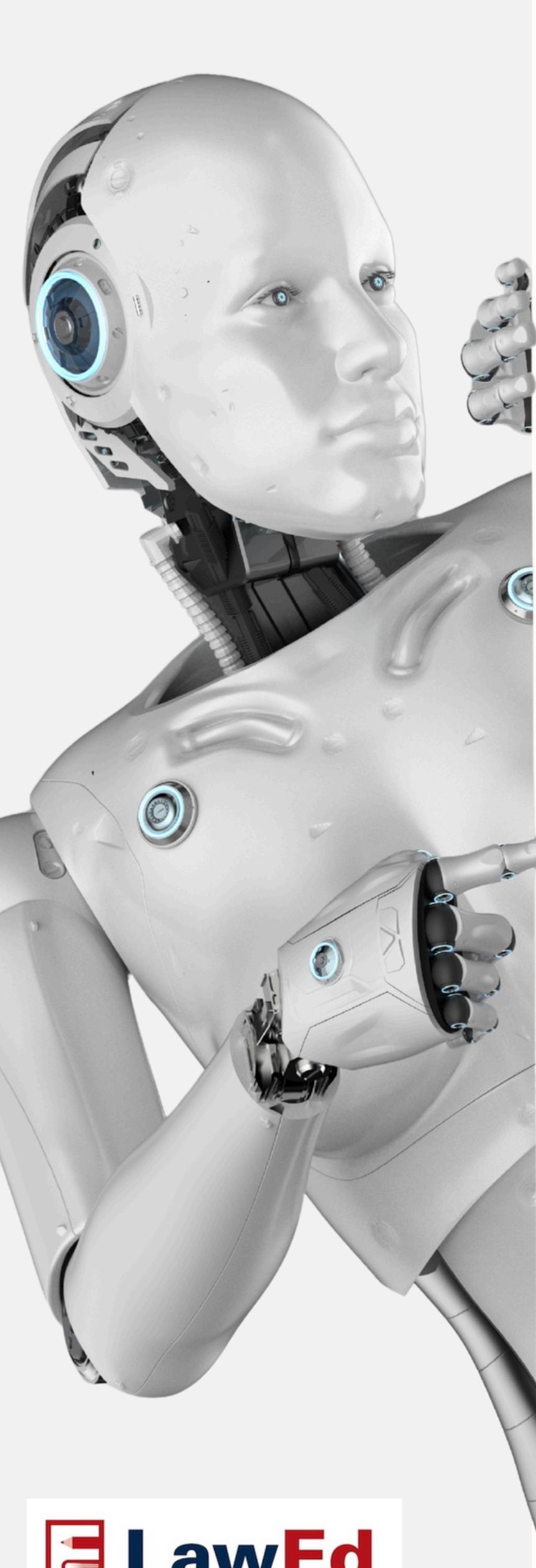


2. ALGORITHMS

Many social media platforms are built to maximise engagement rather than wellbeing. The longer a child spends scrolling, the more money social media platforms make. This means the content shown isn't neutral, it's carefully selected to provoke emotion and keep users watching.

For developing minds, this constant stimulation can lead to unhealthy habits, poor sleep, and increased anxiety. Over time, the boundary between entertainment and compulsion becomes blurred.





3. The rise of

Fake Media

Fake media is no longer limited to edited images, AI can now create entire news stories in seconds. Young people, who already spend much of their time online, are often surrounded by misinformation, disguised as the truth.

Being repeatedly exposed to misinformation can be deeply harmful as it falsely shapes opinions, spreads fear, and influences how young people think and behave.

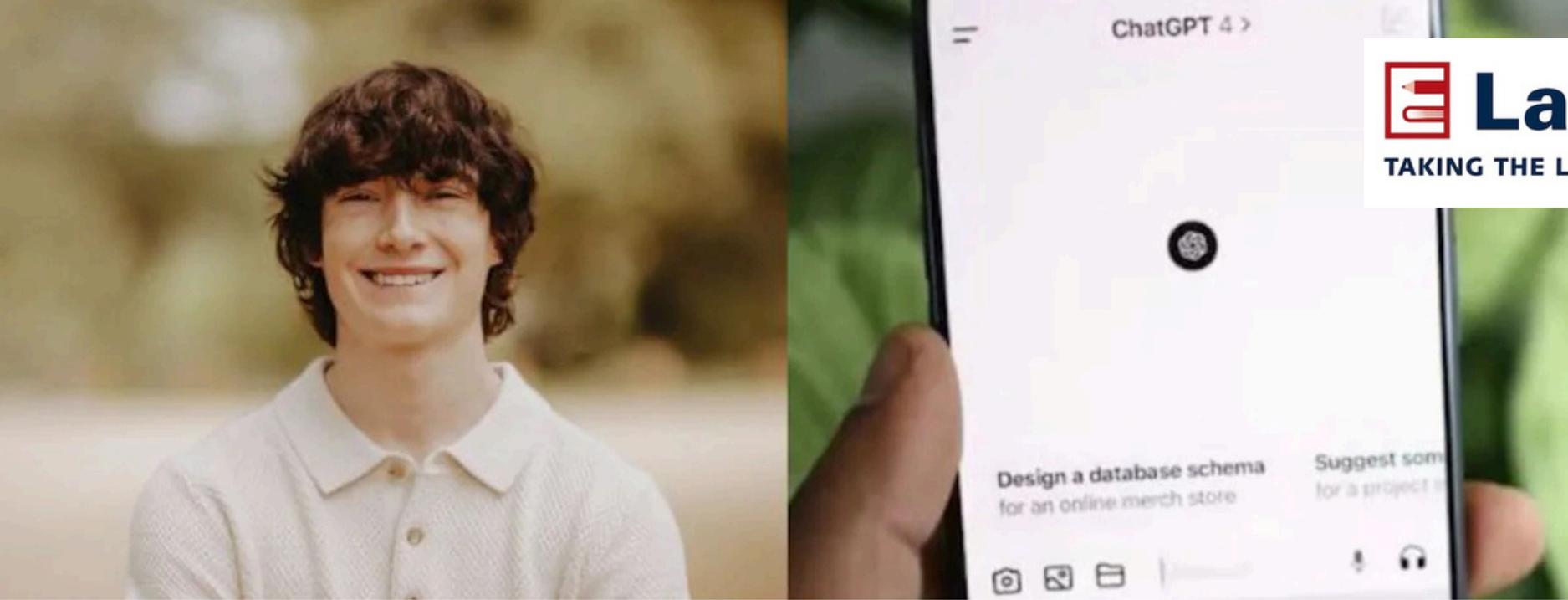
Now more than ever, digital literacy is essential. Young people need to question what they see, look for reliable sources, and remember that “looking real” doesn’t always mean being real.





4. MENTAL HEALTH

AI-driven systems shape what young people see and how they feel, often promoting content that stirs strong emotions to keep them hooked. Constant exposure to this kind of material has been linked to anxiety, depression, poor body image and, in serious cases, self-harm. Research shows how easily young users can be drawn into harmful “rabbit holes,” where algorithms keep showing more extreme or upsetting posts, such as eating disorder content or distressing news stories.



THE ADAM RAINE STORY

The death of 16-year-old Adam Raine in California has raised global concern about young people turning to AI for emotional support. Adam had been using ChatGPT to talk about his worries and thoughts of suicide before taking his own life. His parents have since filed a lawsuit against OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT claiming that it provided their son with specific advice on how to end his life.

OpenAI reported that hundreds of thousands of users each week show signs of distress, including mania, delusional thinking, or suicidal thoughts. This is a powerful reminder that AI is not a therapist. It can sound kind, but it doesn't truly understand or protect you.

CURRENT LAWS IN IRELAND

The **EU Artificial Intelligence Act** (AI Act) is now the key piece of legislation regulating how AI is used across the EU. This significant new law ensures AI is used safely and responsibly in today's digital world, with its measures being introduced gradually over the next few years. Before this, Ireland's existing laws did not fully address the challenges posed by modern AI technologies:

2020

HARASSMENT, HARMFUL COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED OFFENCES ACT 2020 (COCO'S LAW)

Introduced to protect individuals from online abuse and the non-consensual sharing of images or messages.

2009

DEFAMATION ACT 2009:

Allows people to take action if false statements damage their reputation.

2022

ONLINE SAFETY AND MEDIA REGULATION ACT 2022:

Established Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland's media regulator, and set out rules for removing harmful or illegal online content.

2018

DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018 (IMPLEMENTING GDPR)

Protects how personal information is collected, stored, and used by organisations and individuals

DID YOU KNOW?

Ireland now has one of the highest rates of internet use among children in Europe.



WHAT SHOULD IRELAND DO?

Ireland's Oireachtas report on *Safeguarding Children in the Age of AI* made it clear that stronger action is needed to keep young people safe online. It recommends to:

- Mandate stricter age verification for online platforms.
- Turn off algorithm settings that suggest content for anyone under 16.
- Expand the powers of Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland's media regulator, to enforce stronger online safety rules.
- Update legislation to cover AI-generated deepfakes and other forms of digital abuse.





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