

Online Safety Bulletin

...the half termly online safety update



November 2018

What are the risks to young people on social media apps?

- Disclosure of private information
- Bullying
- Cyber-stalking
- Access to age-inappropriate content
- Online grooming
- Encountering comments that are violent, sexual or extremist in nature

It is important to maintain open dialogue with your child regarding their use of social media from the moment they have a mobile phone, to ensure that they are aware of these risks and they know how to use social media apps safely.

When checking your child's phone to ensure they are using it safely, it can seem a tad overwhelming. You may be greeted with an array of apps that you do not recognise, and so it can be difficult to identify which are safe for use and which are not. It can also be difficult to broach the subject with your child effectively to ensure a productive outcome.

The social media apps and websites outlined below come with some risks. It is important to be aware of these risks. It is worth keeping an eye out for them and discussing the risks associated with them, should your child be interested in them, or have the apps downloaded on their phone.

Social Media Apps & Websites



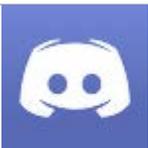
Houseparty is a social networking app that enables group video chatting. As the video is live, there is always the possibility of inappropriate content for children.



Burnbook is an anonymous app for posting text, photos and audio messages about others. The app compiles messages by the school, so the app requires access to your child's location. It encourages students to screenshot the rumours and save them to their phone, which can lead to bullying.



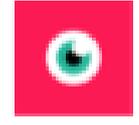
Finstagram is a fake (or second) Instagram account. Children can get a second Instagram account along with their real Instagrams to post silly pictures or videos (without their parents or carers knowing about the second account).



Discord is a free voice, video, and text chat app for gamers. It can be easy for strangers to message children through the app.



Imvu: Users create custom avatars and use them to chat with strangers in random chats or 3D chat rooms. Content on IMVU is inappropriate for teens and avatars can be used to simulate explicit activities.

	<p>Yobo is a dating app for children.</p>
	<p>Mojit Users take videos of themselves as an avatar as part of an augmented reality. Mojiit uses geolocation, meaning strangers can see where they are, and it encourages users to go to certain locations nearby.</p>
	<p>Monkey connects users around the world for 10-second video chats using their Snapchat usernames. Children can see strangers on video with no control over the content.</p>
	<p>Hola Similar to <i>Monkey</i>, Holla also connects users for random video chats.</p>
	<p>Blendr is a location based dating app. It connects the user with random people in their area.</p>
	<p>MyLOL is a dating app for teenagers. It is easy for users to receive contact from strangers, and it is easy for strangers to create fake profiles.</p>
	<p>Musical.ly Users upload live videos of themselves lip-syncing and or dancing to music with the objective of gaining likes & followers. This app is incredibly popular with young people. Children often upload videos in their school uniforms, providing an easy means for predators to locate them.</p>
	<p>Meetme Users create an account to communicate with other random users anywhere in the world. The app currently has 129k daily active users. Young people are at risk of contact from predators, as well as being bullied by other users.</p>
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	<p>Twitch Users broadcast themselves playing video games for other users to watch. Users can also chat with each other. Twitch's online community promotes a pack mentality among users who are predominantly young males.</p>
	<p>sayat.me is a website not an app but it links to social media. Here is how the site describes itself:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create your personal feedback web address 2. Spread the link through Twitter, Facebook, Skype, etc. 3. Read what people think about you 4. Publish your favourite feedback



Calculator% is a calculator app that has a hidden purpose. On the surface, it is a basic (and functional) calculator app. However, if you enter a secret code the app reveals a second function: it allows the owner to hide documents and image files so they are not readily accessible to someone that does not know the passcode.



After School The After School app is an anonymous messaging app for young people. The app only allows school pupils to join. To keep parents and teachers off, students must register via their Facebook profile. The app checks their Facebook friends and location to make sure they go to the school. Once registered, they can only see the feed from their school. While anonymous apps can create a private place to connect with friends, these apps are not a place where young people can go wild with impunity.

Trends

You may be aware of some dangerous trends that make their way across the internet and engage young people. Here are some that have come to our attention:

The Deodorant Challenge

The 'Deodorant Challenge' is a teen viral trend. To participate, students spray their bare skin (or someone else's) with aerosol deodorant for as long as they can stand it. The challenge is painful, can have a lasting impact, and can cause scarring.

The Momo Challenge

Similar to the Blue Whale Challenge, the Momo Challenge is a dangerous viral social media trend. The challenge encourages students to contact an unknown person called "Momo" via WhatsApp. Throughout the challenge, students are sent violent and graphic images and texts. Students who partake in the Momo Challenge are communicating with strangers, who intend to encourage self-harm.

Mindfulness

Whilst it is clear that smartphones and the internet do pose potential risks that we need to be aware of, there are also some excellent resources too. We would like to take this opportunity to let you know of these apps that aim to promote positive mental wellbeing:



Smiling mind is a collection of hundreds of meditations for a wide variety of ages and situations.



Headspace is a collection of resources to help address stress relief, happiness and appreciation.

How do I have these conversations?

It is easy to panic if you see an app on your child's phone that you did not know they had. It is even easier to wonder how to best support your child with making the best decisions, without pushing them away.

It should always start with a conversation. You may find these tips useful:

- **Do not accuse your child.** If they have an app you are worried about, ask them what they use it for, and discuss the positives and negatives of using it. Try to keep them on your side and show understanding of their thoughts to download it in the first place.
- **Discuss the potential risks** with your child and go over some general rules about how to stay safe online.
- Go through the **security settings** together on each app so that you are comfortable with these.
- Discuss the **deletion of any apps** with your child if you decide this so that they understand the reasons.
- Go to Settings and turn **Location Services OFF**. This will ensure that your child's location cannot be identified when using their phone.

- Make a rule that your child should always ask for permission before **downloading** any apps – even the free ones. You can then go through the privacy settings together for apps that are appropriate for children, and can discuss those that are not.
- Advise your child not to share any **passwords** with anyone, except you.
- **Tell your child to let you know** if they notice anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- **Remember that your child has not done this deliberately to upset you.** They can often follow what others are doing and can be unaware of the risks involved.

As a school, we will continue to teach all students how to best stay safe online and make them aware of the risks associated with online behaviour. At home, you are in the best position to monitor your child's online activity and have these individual discussions with them to ensure they stay safe.

Remember that if you are ever concerned about something potentially harmful you find on your child's phone, and would like to seek advice, call the Police on 101 who will be able to assist you further.

Thank you for your continued support with educating our children on the risks of social media use and encouraging good habits and positive behaviours. For more information check out <https://parentzone.org.uk/>.