

24th May 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Safeguarding Issue around Whatsapp and other online platforms

This week we have been made aware of a number of children using WhatsApp, SnapChat and TikTok to communicate with each other using inappropriate language.

We encourage all parents to monitor their children's use of their phone and certainly social media closely. Although you may feel that your child is sensible with their phone, there is always a chance that they may see or be part of a chat or group that is not appropriate for them. We would also like to remind you that Whastapp is not just a messaging service, it is also a social media platform with a minimum age requirement of 13+, though the NSPCC suggests use from 16.

The WhatsApp FAQ website has plenty of useful information about how to manage settings to support with keeping your children safe if you permit them to use this app. https://faq.whatsapp.com/ I have also attached some single-page guides that may be useful for you from the National Online Safety

website regarding the use of WhatsApp, TikTok and SnapChat.

We advise children to express when they feel uncomfortable around what is being communicated by speaking to you at home and us at school. It is also important that they understand that they can leave group chats if they are concerned about the content.

If you would like any support or guidance around the use of social media platforms please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind Regards,

Dawn Wilks

Executive Headteacher



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

EVOLVING SCAMS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

...MSG ME...

FAKE NEWS

VIEW ONCE

CHAT LOCK

VISIBLE LOCATION

Advice for Parents & Carers ... TYPING...

EMPHASISE CAUTION

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

THINKING BEFORE SHARING

CHAT ABOUT PRNACY

Meet Our Expert



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At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they reside doubt in seeded. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of, Please visit www.nettonalconlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

SNOPCHAT

WHAT ARE THE RISKS? Snapchat is an instant messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and taxts to people in their friends list. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures and messages 'disappear' 24 hours after they've been viewed; however, this content isn't as temporary as many believe – with some users saving screens hots or using another device to take a photo of their screen. This year, Snapchat added 'My Al': a customisable chatbot with which people can chat and

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

Even if your child only connects with people they know, they may still get friend requests from strangers. The Quick Add option lets users befriend people the app recommends – but these "friends' are merely a username which could have anyone behind it. Accepting such requests reveals children's personal information through the Story. SnapMap and Spotlight features, potentially putting them at let from predictors.

EXCESSIVE USE

Snapchat works hard on user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). Spotlight Challenges tempt users into spending time producing content in search of cash prizes and online farme, while it's easy for children to pass hours watching Spotlight's enalless scroll cyideos.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some videos and posts on Snapchat aren't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse - so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as blased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore optentially dangerous.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the beautify' offects on photos can set unrealistic body-Image expectations - creating feelings of inadequacy if a young person compares themselves unfavourably with other users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed when if a device is in 'do not disturb' model, increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

VISIBLE LOCATION

Snap Map highlights a device's exact position on a virtual map which is visible to other users. There which is visible to other users. There which is normation: all friends, anly you (Shest Mode) or selected friends. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is intended as a buddy system to ensure friends have reached one safely - but which could also bused to track a young person for more safely.

Advice for Parents & Carers

#NOFILTER

TURN OFF QUICK ADD

The Quick Add feature helps people find each other on the app. This function works based on mutual friends or whether someone's number is in your child's contacts list. Explain to your child that this could potentially make their profile visible to strangers. We recommend that your child turns off Quick Add, which can be done in the settings (accessed via the cog icon)

CHOOSE GOOD CONNECTIONS

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DISCUSS AI

Although My Al's responses can often give the impression that fire a real person, firs essential that young people remember this certainty isn't the case headurage your child to think critically about My Al's replies to their questions: are they accurate and reliable? Remind them that My Al shouldn't replace chatting with their real firlends, and that it's always better to talk to an actual person in relation to medical matters.

CHAT ABOUT CONTENT

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it's important to talk openiy and non-judgementally about sexting, Remind your child that once something's online, the creator loses control over where it ends up and who else sees it. Likewise, it's vital that children understand that some chollenges which become popular on the platform may have potentially harmful consequences.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Snap Stories are visible to everyone your child adds, unless they change the settings. On SnapMaps, their location is visible unless Ghost Mode is enabled (again via settings). It's safest not to add people your child doesn't know in real life especially since the addition of My Places, which allows other Snapchat users to see where your child regularly visits and checks in.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger does connect with your child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, your child can select the three dots on that person's profile and report or black them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user (annoying or malicious messages, spam, or masquerading as someone else, for example).

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber sefety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and camed out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK USA and Australia.



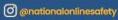


National Online Safety

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

IN-APP SPENDING

ADDICTIVE NATURE

TIKTOK NOW

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

READ THE SIGNS

Meet Our Expert









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