



*Dear Parent/Carer,*

Within my role as community safety officer, I regularly speak to young people in relation to the safe and legal use of social media. Your child's school has a positive and robust approach to internet safety I am pleased to be able to support them with this.

Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Police deal with numerous complaints and reports relating to the misuse of social media, some of which involve young people and whilst we would always support its positive and constructive use, it is recognised that its misuse can lead to distress and cause offence.

This is a time of year when we know that many young people will be accessing new phones and technologies, along with increased access to social media, and to help you support the safe and legal use of social media by your child, I have attached an overview in relation to the sites most commonly used by children, which also includes some useful links.

I hope the following information is useful to you.

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Facebook says....

*“Facebook is a social network, which lets you create a page about yourself. You can add ‘friends’, share pictures and videos, write on people’s pages, send instant messages and join online groups.”*

Knowledge checker!

See if your child can show you how to change settings in relation to tagged friends....

Twitter says....

*“Twitter is a messaging service that lets you post public messages called tweets.*

*These can be up to 140 characters long.*

*As well as tweets, you can send private messages. Brands and companies can also have Twitter accounts”*

**FACEBOOK** -Needs internet/Wi-Fi and can be used on a phone, computer, tablet or smart TV. The Facebook app is free and the user downloads it and creates a personal profile. Most people put up a profile picture so people can see who they are when searching for friends. You cannot join someone else’s FB page (become a ‘friend’) without them accepting your request. Only accept friends you really do know. If you keep your settings right, then strangers will only see a small amount of info if they look at your page.

**Good points** – great for seeing what others are doing and looking at their pictures, sharing things with others, especially those far away. You can chat with a friend privately via direct message or ‘inbox’. Events can be advertised and pages are set up so people can buy and sell things and have discussions

**Bad points** - sometimes used for bullying - writing something unpleasant on someone else’s page or making comments on your own about another. It is also *vital* you understand the privacy setting on Facebook otherwise your child may be sharing information and pictures with people they don’t know!

Children may also be exposed to unwanted material from friends of friends without asking for it (depending on settings).

Your location can be shown which may not be advisable. (Can be altered in settings however).

**The Law** – Bullying can become harassment and this can be dealt with by the police. It can be very distressing for those involved. It is also illegal to post anything indecent on social media and it should be reported immediately.

**What to do** – **Screen shot** any comments, **block** the other person and **report** to someone you can trust.

**TWITTER** - Free. Needs internet/Wi-Fi. Users post a ‘tweet’ of up to 140 characters long. Pictures and videos can also be shared. You don’t accept followers – people choose to follow you. Unless you lock the account you have no choice other than to be followed. (Although you can later ‘mute’ people you don’t want)

**Good points** - not much space for bullying and it is a good way to mix with different people. Hashtags (#) can connect you to others interested in the same topics.

**Bad points** - Users tend to be linked to a lot of people they don’t actually know. It is possible to be exposed to unwanted images or bad language as users see what their followers have posted.

**The Law** – the Harassment law applies to twitter as do laws relating to Indecent images.

**What to do** – you can **mute**, **block** and **report** via Twitter. Use screen shot if necessary and seek advice if concerned.

ooVoo says.....

*“ooVoo is a video chat app. It lets you make video calls, voice calls and send texts to friends and family. You can also start a group video chat with up to 12 people. Privacy settings let you decide if you want to just talk to your friends or with people you don't know.”*

We tell children it's good to share, but online it's different. That's why we're asking parents to be Share Aware.

....NSPCC

YouTube says...

*“YouTube is a place to watch, create and share videos. Videos can include things like music, animation, online blogs and clips from TV shows. You can create your own YouTube account, create a music playlist, and even create your own channel, which means you will have a public profile, and it allows you to comment on videos and create video playlists”.*

and share  
YouTube is a

**OOVoo** is an app that allows you to talk to your friends face to face like Skype. It allows you to talk to just one or a group of up to 12 people. Only one of you needs to download the app – that person can then call others on their contacts list. You will need a phone or tablet with a forward facing camera to show your face.

**Good points** – only one person needs to have the app. By seeing faces, you know that the person is who they say they are. You can change settings to receive or send calls to only those you know. The user chooses who contact them in privacy settings.

**Bad points** – someone could set up a false account to try and get chatting with you. (You would know once you saw their face however) There are in app adverts which if you tap accidentally, can take you to expensive phone lines. (Requires payment of 79p to upgrade to advert free account)

**The law** – Bullying and harassment should be reported as should indecent images or conversations. The same laws apply to video as written or picture posting. (It all comes under communications misuse)

**What to do** - Keep privacy settings tight or *anyone* can see and contact you. Be aware that conversations and video can be recorded so be careful of what is said and done. **Block** and **delete** people from your friends list if they are offensive, bullying etc. **Report** to an adult. *your privacy settings are wide open you can be viewed*

**YOU TUBE** - This is the place to watch cartoons, music videos and funny clips from your favourite shows. You can also make your own channel and put on videos you have recorded yourself and see if you can get lots of 'plays' and 'likes'. (You will need to set up a profile to do this) Some children use it to see how others have played a scene in a video game for help (people record themselves playing for others to watch).

**Good points** – It's fun and entertaining especially if you are away from the TV (You can make a playlist of their favourite music videos, or watch cartoon episodes (needs internet/Wi-Fi).

**Bad points** – YouTube likes to suggest other videos you may like to watch based upon what you are watching. That means if your child plays a suggestive music video or watches someone playing a game for older children, the suggestions may not be age appropriate (includes bad language, suggestive imagery)

**The law** – The uploading of videos containing defamation, pornography, and material encouraging criminal conduct is prohibited by YouTube's terms of service. YouTube relies on its users to flag the content of videos as inappropriate. As parents, it is important to know what children watch and **report** anything unsuitable to YouTube.

Instagram says...

*“Instagram is a picture and video sharing app. Users can post content and use hashtags (#) to share experiences, thoughts or memories with an online community. You can follow your friends, family, celebrities and even companies on Instagram”*



*Ask your child to show you the ‘Private Account setting’ on Instagram. On Snapchat, get them to show you how to change settings for “who can send me snaps” and “who can view my story” (Only one has a ‘Custom’ option - do they know which it is?)*

Snapchat says....

*“Snapchat is an app that lets you send a photo or short video to your friends. The ‘snap’ appears on screen for a matter of seconds before disappearing. There’s also a feature called Snapchat Story that lets you share lots of snaps in a sequence for up to 24 hours”.*

**INSTAGRAM** - one of the main picture sharing apps. Users can share pictures with followers who can post comments. If you use other sites like Facebook or Twitter, you can share them there too at the touch of a button directly from Instagram.

**Good points** – if you like sharing pictures, it’s great. It’s fun to take a picture and share it. Celebrities have made ‘selfies’ popular in recent years. You can set your account to ‘private’ so that people have to ask to be a follower and therefore see your pics or comments. (NB. *Posts can’t be set to private from a desktop computer.*) You can anonymously flag a photo you find indecent directly to Instagram.

**Bad points** - By default (that means the basic setting when you start out) *anyone* can view photos uploaded to Instagram – in other words, your profile and pictures are publicly viewable unless you tell it otherwise. Also, remember that images deleted from your phone/tablet may not be deleted from the server belonging to the app. That means they can be found at a later date. Only share photos you are happy for *everyone* to see!

**The law** – Instagram has been associated with some bullying and this should be reported as it may fall under harassment legislation. Indecent images are also against the law and should not be sent. If received it should also be **reported** immediately.

**SNAPCHAT** - Main selling point is taking a picture that will disappear in a set amount of time (up to 10 seconds). You can either upload a short term image or add a sequence of pictures to a Snapchat story which stays open for 24 hours.

Young people love the spontaneity and they can also open up a chat with friends. There have also been funny filters added recently so that images and videos can be enhanced or added to.

**Good points** – The default setting means that your child will only get pictures from friends – so no nasty surprises unless from a stranger! By having the photos self- destruct in a few seconds, it saves memory. If you login under 13yrs old, you will automatically be directed to Snapkidz, which is more age appropriate and does not allow photo sharing and messaging.

**Bad points** – whilst the photo may disappear from the *phone*, this does not stop it being saved by **screen shot**. Most kids know how to do this. Now, the picture is no longer temporary and is saved. This means it can be shared, so if you don’t want the world to see it – **don’t send it!** (*Snapchat say that you will be advised of a screenshot at the other end, but there are now apps you can get to do this undetected*)

## And finally.....

There are a few extra things to know to make sure you can support your child in their social networking use and make sure they are safe and legal.

- ❖ Although the USA has a *legal* minimum age limit of 13 yrs old for social networking sites, the UK does not and age limits are advisory only. It is necessary however to register so it's worthwhile asking your child how they got their account if they are under 13 yrs old.
- ❖ Although the use of sites is not covered by law in the UK, the activity carried out on the sites is.
- ❖ The Protection from Harassment Act can be used in cases of repeated bullying or harassment. Police and NCC prefer to deal with such cases more informally at first but will use the law should it be required.
- ❖ It is against the law to possess or distribute an indecent image of a child. That means that those young people engaging in 'sexting' (sending naked pictures of themselves to each other) are actually breaking the law. It is not the policy of police or NCC to criminalise young people and it is felt that education is a better approach, however where an adult is exploiting a child, or the incidents are malicious or repeated, the law is used to its full extent.
- ❖ Most young people when spoken to said that their parent or carer was not the first person they would go to if they had a concern about a social media site. They tended to confide in friends initially and teachers are quickly becoming a trusted resource to confide in. For this reason it is important not to alienate your child and their social media use.
- ❖ To make sure that your children are confident they can talk to you about their experiences – good or bad – it is worthwhile engaging with them. Ask them what they are looking at or who they are talking to. Maybe tell the younger ones that this is a condition of them having the app at first.
- ❖ If you have a smart phone or tablet yourself, you can login to your child's account and see what they are posting and seeing. You just need their user name and password, then download the app and log in as them.  
This may be a useful compromise if you are unsure about them having a social media account
- ❖ Remember to tell them to **Block**, **Screenshot** and **Report** anything they know or feel is wrong.
- ❖ Why not look at the sites below for more help and funnies to help get the message over 😊

<http://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Part of the NSPCC – you will find a run down of over 40 different sites; what they do, what you need to know.

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/sexting>

A great place to look at how to deal with and approach the subject of sexting. A difficult topic but one that needs early discussions.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_JUtM\\_mLHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_JUtM_mLHI)

Horrid Histories do internet safety. A funny and age appropriate video from the BBC children's show which demonstrates the need to know your privacy settings.

[http://www.northumbria.police.uk/advice\\_and\\_information/esafety/](http://www.northumbria.police.uk/advice_and_information/esafety/)

Advice from Northumbria police about e safety – not just social networking but fraud and other issues affecting all age groups.