SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE
SEPTEMBER 2023

St. Catherine's RC Primary School

In this edition
- Online safety- group chat apps
- Child Criminal Exploitation

This month's App Focus- TikTok

Online safety: What are group chat apps?

Group chat apps are social media apps which allow users to create large groups to exchange messages.

Some well-known apps are WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and SnapChat.

These apps allow users to send photos, text, videos and links to others in the group. Used responsibly they can be a great way to stay connected.
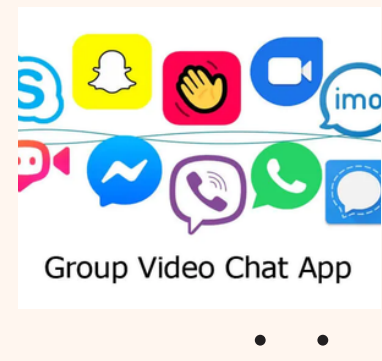
Online etiquette

1) Only invite people into the group if current users agree to it

2) Do not kick people out of the group. If you do not want to have contact with another user, leave the group

3) If you are unhappy with something taking place in the group, speak to a trusted adult. You may want to consider leaving the group

4) Never post your own or anyone else's personal information, even if you think you know everyone in the group

5) A good rule to stick to- only post or say things in a group chat that you would be happy for your parents to see

The dangers of group chat apps for young people

- Some apps allow users to message people they don't know. This allows strangers to connect and can make young people vulnerable to online grooming
- Group chats are not regulated or monitored in any way. This means users can share upsetting or inappropriate material which can be viewed by children
- Apps which have a disappearing message functions can give young people the opportunity to share more risky/inappropriate content. This content is difficult to report if has been deleted or has disappeared

Advice for parents:

- Research any apps you or your child download to make sure you know how to use the safety and privacy functions
- Make it normal for your child to show you the groups they are in so you can identify the other users and make sure there are aren't any strangers in the group
- Show your child how to block and report people they don't know and talk through situations where they might need to use these functions
- Teach your child digital etiquette so they know how to behave in the online world (see above)

Group Video Chat App

Child Criminal Exploitation: What is it?

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a form of child abuse. Children are coerced and forced into committing crimes. Examples of the crimes might be:

- working in cannabis factories
- moving drugs (county lines)
- moving or holding money (sometimes through their bank account)
- moving or holding weapons
- carrying out of acts of violence

See the graphic on the right for signs that a young person may be involved in CCE.

Any child could be exploited by criminals

Signs to be aware of …

BEHAVIOUR? Disrespectful, secretive, change in attitude.

LOTS OF MONEY? Unexplained money, different phone, expensive clothes.

POPULAR? Frequent texts and calls at all hours. New friends, might be older.

DISTANT? Signs of harm or depression. Missing school.

UNUSUAL ITEMS? Balaclava, debit cards, drugs, knives.

JOURNEYS? Frequent and repeat trips. Leaving without explanation.

How do children become involved in CCE?

Organised crime gangs groom children as they are less suspicious than adults. Gang members may:

- Hang around places young people are attracted to such as fast food establishments, especially if they are near a school
- Make friends with those who are lonely and may offer protection against bullies
- Offer small jobs to those who are interested in making some money
- Offer a young person a sense of belonging

If you suspect your child is involved in CCE let them know that you are worried about them and that you are there to listen to them.

Speak to a member of the pastoral team at your child's school- they are there to help and support. The Police will also support you and will never blame you or your child.
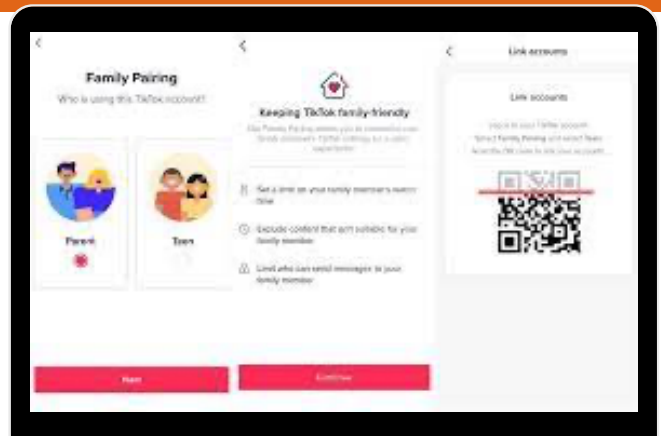
App focus...
TikTok

What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social media platform used to create, share and discover short videos. Users should be age 13 and above. 30 million videos are posted on TikTok each day.

Some of the risks with TikTok are that it is very easy for children to access adult content, in fact, it can be recommended to them through the 'For You' feed.

TikTok can be a creative outlet for young people but this can leave them vulnerable to negative comments and reactions.

Safety features on TikTok

- Family pairing allows parents to control their child's account from their own
- Privacy settings in the account will restrict who can watch the user's videos and can filter out videos that contain inappropriate adult content