SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

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Image sharing: Understanding the issue

Capturing and sharing photos with friends and family has become an integral part of daily life for many of us. With young children now having access to camera phones and tablets, the risk of inappropriate images being sent or received has significantly increased. In 2022, the NSPCC reported an 82% rise in online grooming of children over a five-year period, with a quarter of these cases involving primary school-aged children. Research indicates that many individuals grooming children aim to obtain Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), often in the form of images that are generated by the children themselves. This highlights the critical need for safety measures to be implemented when a child has access to a device with a camera.

Young children may share images online in various contexts, frequently without considering potential risks. Here are some common situations where they may wish to share images:

- Excited about a moment: Children want to share a photo of a new activity, toy or pet with friends or family.
- In group chats: Some children use messaging apps to stay connected with friends, classmates or family members.
- Unintentionally whilst gaming: Many games allow children to share in-game moments or screenshots. They may also share other photos from the camera roll.
- Clicking buttons unintentionally: Sometimes children may not realise that clicking certain buttons may share an image online.
- Responding to requests from friends: A friend may ask them for a picture, such as a selfie.
- Responding to a request from a stranger: In some cases children may be manipulated or coerced into sending a stranger a picture of themselves.
- Joining online challenges: They may be encouraged to take part in photo challenges online or post selfies for fun.
- Learning to use new devices: Children often experiment with cameras and social media functions, especially if they are new to them.

In these situations, children may often lack the judgement or understanding of a risky situation and therefore education, guidance and boundaries are important.

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Understanding consent

Consent means giving clear, informed, and voluntary permission to do something. While it's often used when talking about sexual activities, it's also important in other situations, like setting boundaries in relationships and making decisions. For children, this means making sure they can say "yes" or "no" without feeling pressured, forced, or tricked into it.

Why is it important for children to understand consent?

- Teaching consent encourages children to respect their own and others' physical and emotional boundaries.
- Consent fosters open communication, mutual respect and equality in relationships.
- Educating children about consent helps prevent situations of sexual assault, harassment and coercion.
- Understanding consent gives children the tools to make informed choices about their body and relationships.
- Consent creates a culture of respect which helps to reduce harmful behaviours like victim-blaming.

The 4 C's of consent help children know if consent has and is been given:

- **Clear:** Yes means yes. If it isn't a yes, it's a no.
- **Continuous:** Keep checking that it is still a yes; yes now doesn't necessarily mean yes later.
- **Coercion-free:** It isn't yes if pressure has been put on someone to do something.
- **Conscious:** The person giving consent must be fully capable of giving consent.

What parents and carers should know about Telegram

This summer, Telegram made headlines when its owner was arrested.

Although it may not be the most popular messaging app among young people, it is considered one of the fastest-growing platforms.

While there are many discussions surrounding the risks associated with using Telegram, here are some key points to keep in mind.

RISKS TO CONSIDER

IF YOUR CHILD USES TELEGRAM

END-TO-END ENCRYPTION

Private conversations known as "Secret Chats", can only be accessed by the participants. This puts children at risk.

SELF-DESTRUCTING MESSAGES

A timer can be set when sending a message in a Secret Chat which will then self-destruct/ disappear.

LARGE GROUP CHATS

Group chats known as Channels can include up to 200,000 participants. This allows for unregulated conversations.

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

"People Nearby" connects users locally, but may expose children to grooming and exploitation risks.