



Preventing Child Exploitation Update

News

We have received reports in Staffordshire of approaches to youngsters through social media platforms, inviting them to participate in online challenges which could potentially compromise their wellbeing and safety.

It's really important our youngsters have good cyber hygiene and a good understanding of online usage and safety, to ensure they refrain from engaging with requests or invitations from persons who they do not know or trust. Details concerning such challenges and **what parents, carers and educators need to know and can do**, can be viewed here:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/advice-schools-responding-online-challenges>

Additionally, the website has some really useful resources to support young people, carers and parents with online safety issues which can be viewed here:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

Social media app information



Secret Calculator app – Calculator +

This app acts like a photo vault to store all password-protected files, and can only be viewed inside the app. A parent/carer who is unaware of this app, would never expect a simple calculator looking app is used to hide files. The icon looks like a normal calculator. If you want to access the hidden images you will need a password that has been set by the child/owner of the device when first installing the app. You will not be able to view photos or videos in the default iPhone or Android Gallery.

The Home Office have reported cases where perpetrators of child sexual abuse have used this app to hide indecent images of children. Peer on peer sexual exploitation and image sharing "sending nudes" amongst children and young people is also a current problem as most professionals are already aware.

There is a risk therefore that if a child or young person wanted to hide indecent images, then access to apps such as these could allow them to do so.

Calculator+ is not the only app available to hide images. There are many apps in Playstore or the Apple app store that can do this. Some of the popular apps is KeepSafe, Calculator vault, and Private Photos Video.

To know if a child has one of these apps parents can login in to their app store and type in the word 'Calculator', 'Secret', or 'Photo Hider'. If it shows 'Open' means the child has one of these apps. But if it prompts 'Install' it means that they do not have the app.

It's important that parents/carers and professionals can talk to children and young people about their internet use and monitor the apps that they have downloaded. It can be really upsetting and difficult for parents to talk to their children about indecent images, particularly if their child has been a victim or they discover that their child has such images stored on their device.

The NSPCC offer some great advice around sexting/sharing indecent images. There are also some really useful tips on how to tackle conversations with children about this issue. The link below has further details:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/sexting-sending-nudes/>

Resources/Signposting

Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM) - Online gaming and gambling

The amount of time that children and young people spend gaming online has increased, particularly during the recent lockdown. There are a number of risks that they face as a result. Not only in terms of them potentially interacting with unknown people who may wish to cause them harm, but also related to the amount of screen time they experience.

Gambling is also now a risk that children can be exposed to. In app purchases such as "loot boxes" are very tempting to children and they may feel pressured into spending money to purchase them. A "loot box" is a virtual treasure chest containing undisclosed items that can be used in the game i.e. ways to customise characters, advice on how to progress through a game or just to convey status to other gamers.

YGAM have a wealth of advice around online gaming and gambling that can be useful for parents and professionals alike. Advice around the identifying game related harms, tips to help reduce gaming time and also help to understanding and controlling “in app purchases.”

They also have resources for professionals and offer free online workshops to help those professionals who work with children and young people aged 7-25.

Their website with further details can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.ygam.org/>

I hope you find the information useful,

Ruth Fittes - Early Intervention and Prevention Unit

