

Reminders – Use of social media platforms and age appropriate material

During lockdown, many children may have increased their usage of social media, online gaming and access of films. Unfortunately, not all of these platforms are appropriate for their age.

Whilst we know that our parents are incredibly vigilant, social media changes rapidly and new platforms are popping up, making it more difficult to keep a close watch on activity. As a parent it's also important you know that all social networking platforms (or social networking apps, if on a smartphone) have age limits. Some social networks use technologies that may not be right for some ages or engage with communities that are made up of people much older than your child.

Click on the link below to find out more about the age limits:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking/>

So what are the risks of using an underage social networking account?

There are many risks when your child uses an unsupervised account or makes an account on a social network site that is not age appropriate. So what are the risks of an underage social networking account?

- Many sites include an instant message function that allows private conversations between site members.
- Most social networking sites have an app version available, meaning your child will have access to the social network from their smartphone or tablet. Some versions of social networks use the location of the phone.
- Information shared between friends can be easily copied and may spread.
- It isn't easy to take back information that has been posted – and can be impossible if it's already been shared.
- Not everyone your child meets online will be who they say they are. Chatrooms and forums can connect people who are complete strangers and can be unmoderated.
- Chatrooms and forums are some of the places online groomers go to connect with children. This is sometimes done through video chat programs. They can also be places where people use a lot of inappropriate language and engage in online activities with people who may be a lot older or not who they say they are.

Top social networks for kids

If your child is eager to start tweeting, posting or sharing but they struggle to find a network that is suitable for their age, then there are a number of alternative social networks made for children that you can point them to.

These offer child-friendly features like games and contests but also give you a chance to use them as a teaching tool to get them sharing safely.

Ultimately, these social networks give children a safer environment where they can share their experiences and engage with friends they know.

Here are some age-appropriate social media apps for younger children that you may find useful. For further details about these apps, just click on the links.

6-10 years

Spotlite (formerly Kudos) - <https://www.gospotlite.com/>

PlayKids Talk <https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/playkids-talk-kids-safe-messenger>

Kidzworld: Chat Room & Forums - <https://www.kidzworld.com/>

Grom Social - <https://gromsocial.com/parents/>

11-13 years

Popjam - <https://www.popjam.com/>

Age appropriate material

It is also important to bear in mind the access your child may have or see with regards to online platforms, games, television programmes and films; again most will have age related guidance. This includes the use of YouTube.

We have had some very young learners discuss films they have watched, graphic games they may have seen or programmes they have watched which are not suitable for children.

Please ensure if your child has older siblings or may be able to access this material themselves, that you can check your parental controls. Furthermore, it is important to keep their environment safe and ensure any content they have access to is suitable for their age.

Thank you for your support and working together with us, to keep our children safe.

Chantry Staff