



Social Media - General Awareness 2

Parents/Guardians should maintain a constant scrutiny of their child's devices (e.g. phone, tablet, laptop).

The Online Safety Act 2023 was tabled to identify, mitigate and manage the risk of harm to children from harmful content and activity. It seeks to secure in law a higher standard of protection for children in different age groups. There is a duty of care to ensure children are protected and not likely to access content including emails, SMS and MMS messages, one-to-one live aural communications and other user-to-user services that may be harmful.

Parents/Guardians should be aware there is a minimum age to use apps such as Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, X or Facebook. Most photo and video messaging apps require the mandatory age verification of users. As a result of recent legislation some apps have increased the minimum age from 13 to 16 or 18. For example, someone using WhatsApp should be 16 or older. Therefore, most social media sites are not suitable for primary children and parents/guardians are encouraged to delete any such apps from a child's devices.

If an app is not visible, but a parent/guardian suspects a child may have downloaded one or more, checking in the updates section of the App Store under 'Purchased' should be carried out. All the apps ever downloaded should be stored there.

While deleting an app takes care of the immediate issue, there may be a larger issue at hand when it comes to the use of social media by a child. Parents/Guardians should take the opportunity to have a conversation about social media and the internet at home.

The Safer Schools App is a digital safeguarding communication toolkit for parents/guardians. It helps them engage by providing information that will keep them better informed and children better protected.

Children need to be made aware that nothing online is truly anonymous or temporary. Not knowing the law, or saying it was 'just a joke' can still land a child in trouble with the law. Anything they post that is inappropriate will most likely be investigated by the PSNI.

For further information visit:
www.ceop.police.uk/safetycentre/
www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
www.saferschoolsni.co.uk

