

Parents Guide to Apps



Do you know what your child is doing online?

Do you know the risks and rewards attached to apps your child may be using?

This guide is designed to help parents understand the pros and cons of the instant messaging apps young people are currently using. By using the guide parents and carers will feel informed enough to discuss with young people how they can stay safe online.



Instant Messaging

Instant messaging takes place in real time, over the internet. It can take place privately or in groups. It can be text-based or use other media such as webcam, videos and photos.

Why Instant Messaging?

In an article by The Observer on 10 November 2013, at least five reasons were cited for young people's use of instant messaging:

- Older generation using Facebook – young people do not want to network on the same sites as their parents.
- Private chat with friends in real time.
- Young people's social lives are largely virtual.
- 78% of young people use mobile messengers to meet up.
- The rise of the selfie... without fear of leaving a permanent digital footprint.



Instant messaging has grown increasingly popular with the development of sophisticated apps that offer a better experience, often for free and with emphasis on privacy.

Young people's social lives are conducted in the virtual world.





Ask.fm is an online site where users ask questions that are answered by other users, sometimes anonymously.



This site has been linked to teen suicide through incidents of cyberbullying.

The site does not protect users from malicious abuse.

There is a facility where Q and As can be shared elsewhere, including Facebook.

According to *The Leitrim Observer*, Ciara Pugsley (15) committed suicide in the woods near her home in Ireland after incessant bullying on her Ask.fm page.



Picture courtesy of www.stopchildbullying.org



badoo

Badoo is a social media dating website that places you in touch with local people.

CAUTION

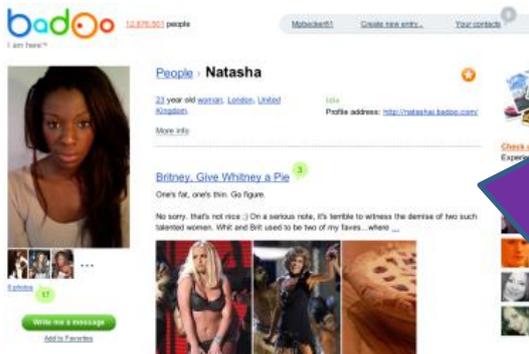
Users are recruited via an e-mail claiming someone is interested in them.

Users are incentivised to share their friends' information from Facebook.

Users can allow other users to access their private pictures.

Badoo will spam ads to users' e-mail addresses.

Users have to upload at least three pictures of themselves.



'I think Maryam... is a babe, so I message her, not really expecting a response because I wasn't willing to purchase the Super Powers necessary to leap to the top of her queue. At the end of the day on Friday, desire took over, and I decided to get the powers for free – by inviting all of my Facebook contacts (by default Badoo selects all) to join the site too. Big mistake. Not only did Badoo send invitations to all of my Facebook contacts, but apparently to all of my Gmail contacts as well. Within three minutes, a confused friend in Malibu was calling, asking where I had taken him. While I tried to help him figure out how to delete his new Badoo account I nervously giggled, realizing the larger scope of this particular *I accept*. "Dan is looking for women ages 18-35," he said, "yeah, I bet you are." On Saturday, I was walking in Astoria with my neighbourhood friend, Keith, explaining the Badoo spam he'd received on...his email — when I got a voicemail from my mom: "I got this thing on my email... it said, 'Daniel is trying to send you a message through Badoo' don't know if it's legit."

By Laura Munro-Oakley



BlackBerry Messenger is available on both BlackBerry and Android and both text and picture messaging can be used on it. Users have unique PIN codes which they share with friends so they can chat.

CAUTION

There is a risk sharing PINs on other apps i.e. Facebook where strangers have access.

New contacts can be added by sharing e-mail addresses.

My stepsister once sent a naked picture of herself to her boyfriend, and when they broke up, he printed it off and made a poster saying, "Look at me, I'm a slag" that had her phone number and her BBM pin [her "address" on the BlackBerry Instant Messenger service] on it. The posters were put up round his school. She started getting messages five minutes later. She ended up changing her number and getting Mum to buy her a new phone – she told her it was broken. The boy probably got told off for putting the posters up, but no one ever contacted my stepsister. Our mum still doesn't know.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/09/children-online-sexting-bullying-security-settings>

By Laura Munro-Oakley



The Experience Project is a site where anyone can share experiences anonymously



There is inappropriate content on there.

There is no obligation for the site to remove inappropriate content.

The site does not review posted content for offensive content.

Anyone over 13 can join.

“The sort of stuff we do, boys my age, is go on pornographic websites. Most are massive collections of all types of free content. I could watch from two minutes to an hour a day. Does it affect the way I look at women? Massively.”



<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/09>

By Laura Munro-Oakley



Facebook messaging is a text and voice messaging app that doesn't require a Facebook account.



If somebody has your mobile number they can chat to you, whether they are on your contacts list or not.

Use of GPS can inform other users of your location.

Appropriate



Chris Pasca wrote at 5:40pm
Hey dude - what's going on? It's been a long time! How have you been?!



Tim Mendica wrote at 11:42pm
Great to see you out last night! Guess I owe you a drink!



Eric Mattias wrote at 12:34 am
Happy birthday, you trick-ass pony bitch!

INAPPROPRIATE



Michael Adler wrote at 2:24 pm
You said we would be just like Leopold & Loeb, but did you actually read how that story turned out? I think we might have a problem.



Bunker Atkinson wrote at 12:34 am
I don't think I've ever seen anyone shoot up that much paint thinner without chewing their own tongue off. You're the MAN!



Wayne Gladstone wrote 3:14 am
It's not gay if your balls don't touch... right?

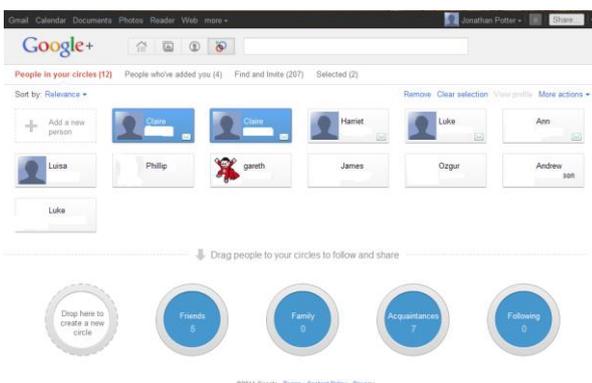


Google plus is a social network with real time video chats in Hangouts. You can limit who sees your posts by using friendship circles. There are age-appropriate privacy default settings for users.



There is a risk young people will lie about their age to get around the age-appropriate privacy settings.

You can talk to strangers online and so there is a risk of grooming and sexting.



Case study

Young female accesses Google + and chats online to people she doesn't know. She is invited into a hangout where a male asks her to share explicit pictures. She does so. Consequently, she is regularly harassed by people asking for sex chats and explicit pictures.



Users can snap, edit and share photos and 15 second videos. This is popular because teens want to achieve 'likes.'



Public photos are a default setting and so privacy settings need to be fixed.

Inappropriate content can slip in.

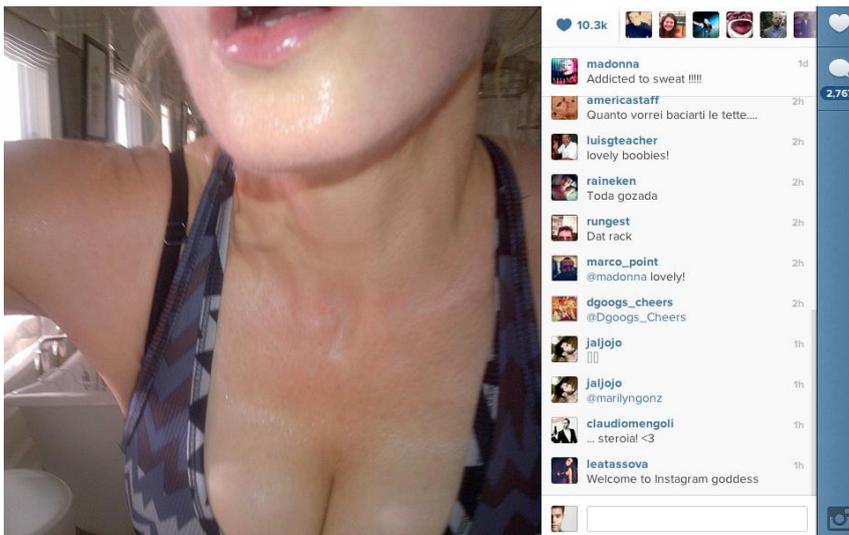


Image taken from Madonna's account.



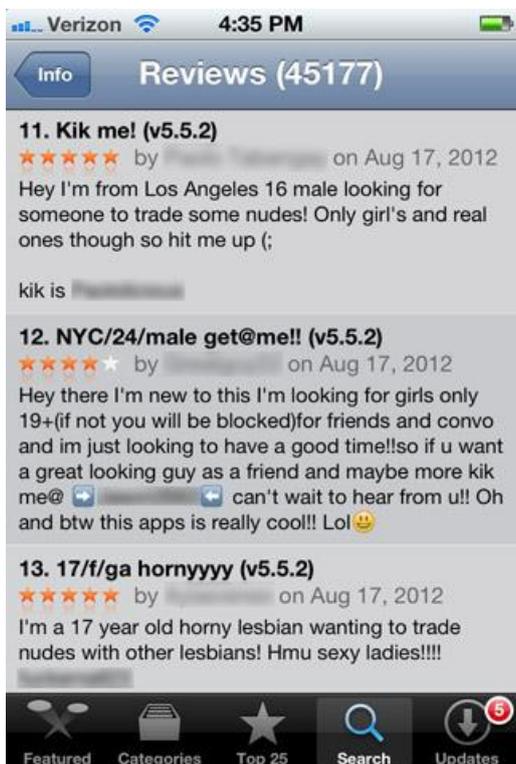
Kik is a free social networking app, which is fast with no messaging or character limits. Users have usernames and so you can only chat to someone if you know their username. Pictures can also be shared.



Kik links with Instagram and so media can be shared.

There have been cases where young people have been contacted by strangers, because young people have shared their usernames on other apps, such as Facebook.

There is a risk of sexting.



Here is what happened...someone on Instagram contacted one of my daughter's friends to connect on Kik. And once they were over on Kik messenger and chatting, this "stranger" asked to see this child's privates.

Michael Sheehan – 2/7/2012



This is an online chat site using both text and video.



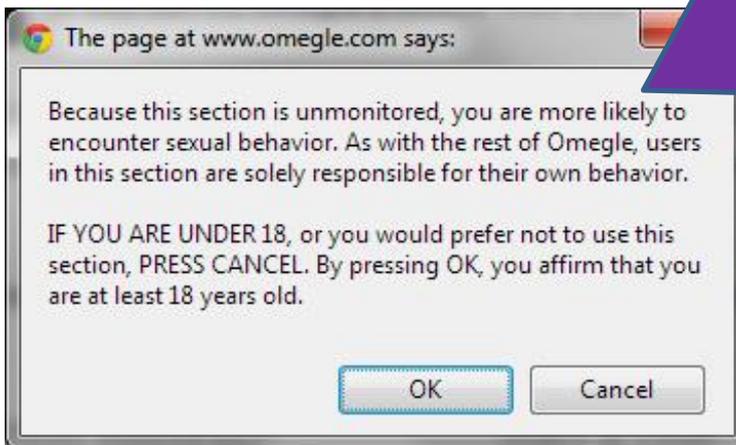
The aim of the site is to link strangers to engage online.

Omegle chooses how you speak with.

Users are anonymous until they share personal information.

Omegle do not monitor content

“One video was a teen girl’s story of how she met up with an Omegle chat buddy in person without her parents’ knowledge. Another particularly sicko video showed how someone scared teens on an Omegle video chat with his face made up similar to the Joker from the Batman movie.”



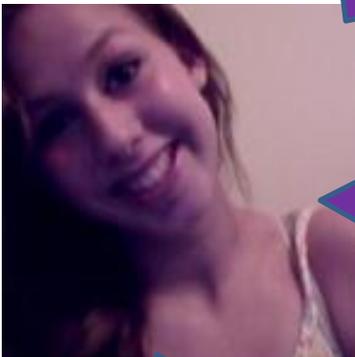


Oovoo is a video, voice and messaging app where up to six people can chat as a group. Users have an approved contact list.

CAUTION

The approved contact list enhances safety but is under the control of the user.

"A couple of weeks ago I was pressured by a guy to send him a naked pic and he bothered me nonstop and I always said no but because I did, he started calling me a prude. I hate being called prude because I'm really not but I just didn't trust him... After a couple of days of the nonstop asking I gave in and told him he cannot show or tell ANYONE and he swore to god he won't.



Then a week after that the guy I like called me at 3:00 in the morning and woke me up and asked to oovoo. I said yes cause we never talk and I like him a lot. He's a grade above me... so anyway, while we were oovooing I was kinda half asleep and don't even remember anything but turning my webcam lens to blurry and giving him a quick flash. I did it because he was bothering me about it and told me that I'd be prude if I didn't do it. he swore he won't tell anyone.

Yesterday my best friend texted me and said "way to go, hoe. You sext everyone, don't you? Everyone hates you now and I have no respect for you anymore. smh you're so stupid..."

'The guy had showed em all the picture and the guy I like told em all I flashed him. I am sooo embarrassed. I lost a lot of friends because of this and I really don't know what to do :(

Yes I am underage. Only 14... now only guys are talking to me and they're just asking for favours. What do I do? I need to ignore everyone but I don't know how. fml. '

By Laura Munro-Oakley



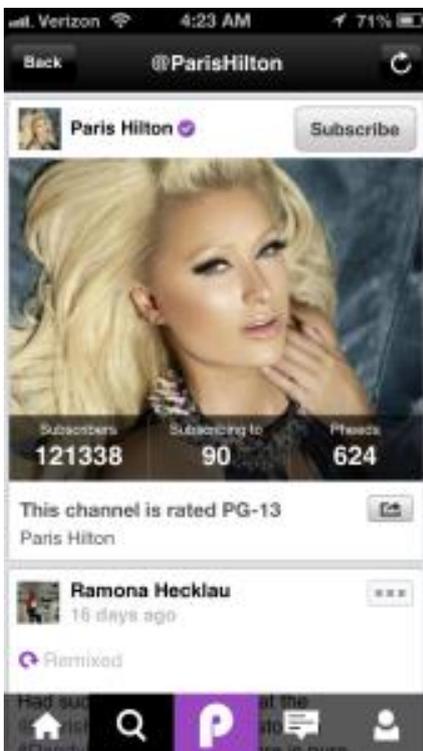
This is a personal channel similar to YouTube that others can pay to view. This means that users have control and ownership over content. Its community guidelines state that it doesn't allow pornography or sexually explicit material as well as threatening, embarrassing, hateful, racially or ethnically insulting, libellous, defaming or otherwise inappropriate content.

Users can flag content that is inappropriate.



This is a public space.

There is a lot of sharing across other apps, like Instagram or Vine.



Pheed is often used as a self-promotional tool for celebrities.



Skype is used for text, video and voice chats. It's free.



There have been cases where young people have been on Skype and approached by strangers.

There is a risk of exposure to inappropriate material

Case Study 1

Police say Montalbo coerced two juveniles to perform sexual acts on each other via Skype after threatening to post nude photos of one of them on Facebook if she didn't obey his commands.



Case study 2

September 1st marked the first day of school for a 10-year-old girl in Lake Forest, Illinois. That evening, she used Skype, a free video chat and instant messaging service, to talk to her friends about their first day and discuss homework assignments. Everything was going great until an unfamiliar screen name popped up and requested to chat with the girl. Thinking it was a neighbourhood friend, she accepted the request, and what she saw next was extremely shocking.

The video revealed a naked, middle-aged man inappropriately touching himself and sending tasteless messages. The girl screamed for her mother who quickly notified the police. <http://www.safetyweb.com/blog/internet-safety-tips-to-keep-kids-safe-on-skype/>



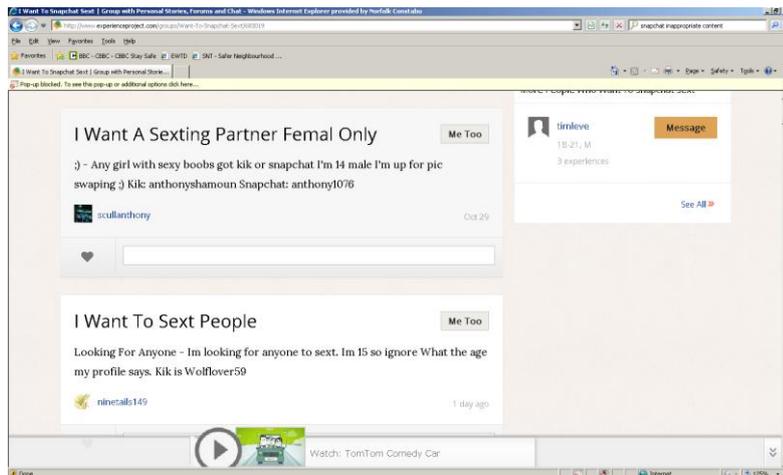
Snapchat places a time limit on pictures and videos that are sent before they disappear. The media tends to send and load faster than e-mail or text.

CAUTION

Snapchats can be recovered, copied and saved.

Makes sexting seem safer.

Young people advertise their Snapchat username to sext.



'I found out about Snapchat when a girl offered me a picture of herself. You take a picture, write something and then when the message is opened, the receiver has 10 seconds to see it before it deletes itself. I think, though they don't say it, it's designed for children my age to send inappropriate pictures. I haven't sent any, but I have received topless pictures from girls I know, generally from my class at school. It's unlikely the girls' parents know. They're probably better at hiding it than I am. Half the time I just look at the pictures and don't reply. When you don't reply, they can see that you've opened it, which normally makes them send a couple more messages, saying, "Reply to me, goddamit."'

tumblr.

Tumblr is a cross between a blog and Twitter – streaming scrapbook or text, photos and/or videos and audio.

CAUTION

Tumblelogs can be made public.

Porn is easy to find.

Privacy is complicated – a user may have one profile for privacy, the other is public.

Copying and sharing is common.



'I caught my cousin surfing on tumblr while I was away from my computer and he was looking at extremely inappropriate content, [e.g. porn] and I'm wondering could I get in trouble for his behaviour.
Yeah I know, shouldn't have left the computer on while I was away but I simply went into the next room, I didn't know he'd do that '

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20121014120754AAZ6Bya>



Twitter is a microblogging site. Users can blog up to 140 character messages.



Tweeting is public unless you use privacy settings.

Updates appear immediately after pressing tweet.

Some material can be inappropriate.

Older men, people I've never spoken to, are always adding me on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. I've had a message saying, "I hope you're a real ginger – I want to taste you."



www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/09



Vine is a social media app for posting and watching six second video clips.



Footage includes nudity and drug use.

All posts, accounts and comments are made public by default.

Secret filming can mean public posting.



In the news:

‘The video-sharing service allots users six seconds to craft a creative video; some users have a more adult interpretation of that edict. The rating follows a controversy Vine faced soon after its launch last month, when a pornographic video was accidentally featured as an “editors’ pick.”

Washington Post Feb 2013



WhatsApp is a multimedia and group chat app.



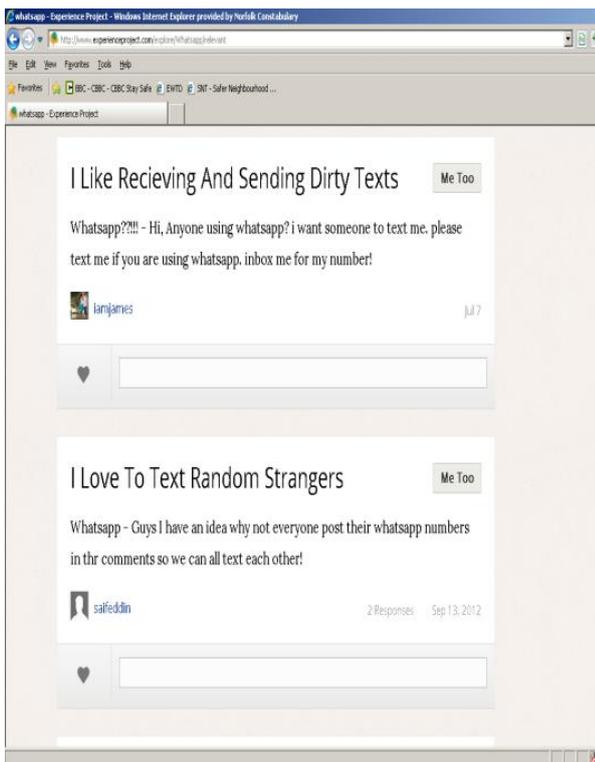
There are no PINS or usernames – WhatsApp uses mobile numbers.

WhatsApp is always on and always connected

There is a Share location component.

Contacts who already have Whatsapp are automatically displayed.

There is no SSL encryption – hackers can view private information through unsecure Wi-Fi networks.



This screen shot from the Experience Project highlights how Whatsapp has been used.

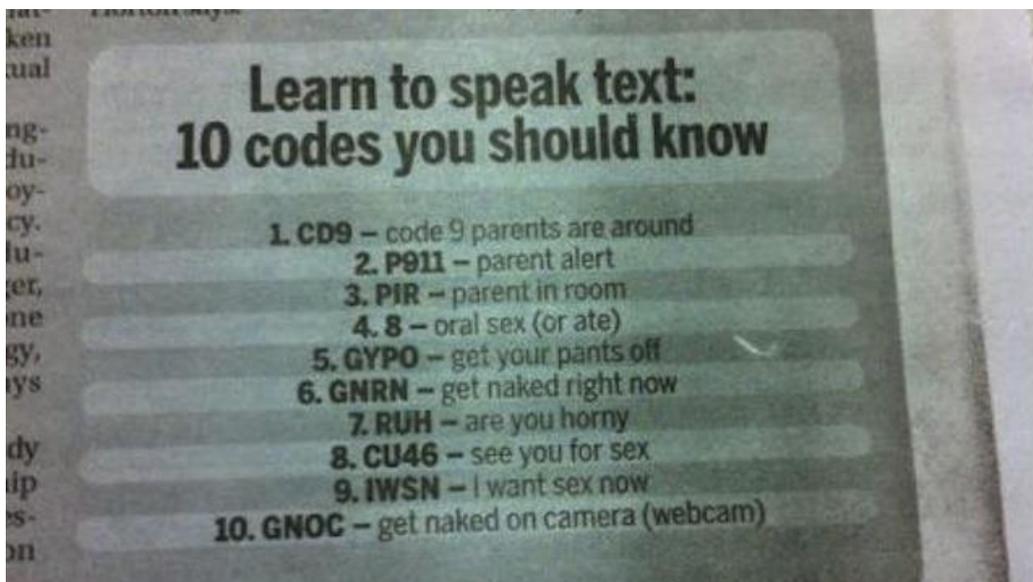
By Laura Munro-Oakley

How young people communicate online

"I've been having a relationship with someone online. I felt like he loved me and I started to feel the same. We started 'sexting' and I sent him pictures but he ended it last week and I feel awful. I have coped by self-harming."
- Young person

"For someone who doesn't have an active social life, it provides me with a way of not becoming cut off with the outside world."^{**}

- Young male



Young people's experiences online

Sexting is really pretty normal at my age. My friends and I talk very openly about our experiences within our relationships and the sort of things we've sent each other. It seems like everyone's doing it.



We started by sending sexual texts by Blackberry Messenger, then to pictures, voice notes and short videos. Someone saw a video message I had sent to a previous girlfriend and posted it online. They called me a pervert and lots of people I knew saw it – it was clearly me pictured.

Once someone I was sexting said if I didn't send more pictures they would post those I'd already sent on Facebook.



'I've told nobody, I have been bullied by 2 girls [on Instagram] my friends don't know NOBODY does I need some help please'

'okay well, I was a idiot, I got very pressured in to sending pictures of my, by this...'John' ...I met him on a chat site...he asked me many times to send a picture of me topless with just a bra...he said to me 'put your hair up, and put your bra tight so your boobs look bigger and I did, (I was 12 and I'm now 13) week later he said if I didn't send nudes he would put the other pictures on porn sites!!! I didn't send him nudes...he gave me a link to the porn site!! I think it has child pornography on there because it said at the bottom of the page it said 'hot young girls 18 and younger' ...actually was a section of pictures of young kids.'

'There's this boy who's a fair bit older than me that keeps saying he loves me and stuff on Facebook. He'd like to go out with me and maybe even lose his virginity to me. I said he wouldn't do that. I don't want to block him. He could be creepy. Yeah I know that but what if it is for real? Even if he doesn't [love me] he's the only one that's ever told me it. It makes me feel better when he says stuff like this about me... what do I do???'

By Laura Munro-Oakley

In summary...

- **Young people's social lives are conducted both in the digital and real world.**
- **There is risk to children whilst online**

BUT...there are ways we can keep our children safe online.

Educate

Educate yourself and your child. Children are using the internet younger than before; teach them how to keep themselves safe.
Find the privacy settings for your devices and the apps your children are using.

Communicate

Keep an open dialogue with your child; be interested in what they are doing online. Let your child know that if something goes wrong online they must tell you or somebody they trust.

Get involved

Find out what apps your children are using and join yourself.

Technology

Use technology to protect your child. There is software available to track what your child is doing. Find out how to set parental controls on the devices your child uses. Consider using your Wi-Fi settings to shut the internet down after a certain time. Speak to your service provider and find out how they can help.

Be practical

A single charging point for devices, in a communal area in the house ensures that all devices are in one place at bedtime.

Do your research

Check online to keep up to date on the latest information concerning internet safety, a good place to start is: www.thinkyounow.co.uk