



NORFOLK

CONSTABULARY

Our Priority is You

Norfolk Constabulary

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Online safety is one of the key messages that schools and the Police deliver to students from a very early age. Usually children use the internet for purely innocent means, such as talking to friends, listening and sharing videos and music and their own activities, interests and studying. Most of the time this is perfectly acceptable, however the risks and dangers of the internet are not always obvious until it is too late.

These days it is not only the 'stranger danger' on the street that concerns us, but the stranger on the other side of a computer screen. Likewise cyber bullying can occur from peers or individuals well known to the user. It is known that internet grooming and sharing of personal data are some of the fears many parents face when allowing their children online. Social media is a huge part of cyber bullying including harassment which has become a major difficulty for schools and the Police to manage and deal with. More recently, groups with extreme views or those who partake in hate crimes have made use of the Internet, in particular social media, to spread their message to vulnerable individuals.

I would like to make you aware of some of the main online apps that many young people are using to socialize. Many of these apps are intended for social purposes and not to create risk, however each of these apps carries their own dangers when used incorrectly:

Dating apps- These include Tinder, Grindr, Blindr, Whisper, Once, OKCupid and many others. The user is able to share their interests, images and personal details as well as their location on a map using the GPS feature available on most smartphones. They can 'flirt' with or 'date' any individual that views their profile or who the user chooses. Typically the user must be over 18 but this is providing the user is honest. It is unknown to the user how honest their 'match' is until they officially 'meet' them, carrying major risks.

Chat apps- These include Talkshow, Airtime, Beme, Freshteam, Slack, Whatsapp, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Peach, Omegle, Yik Yak and many others. The user is able to use live video links or still images or pre-recorded videos to share with their contacts. Most of these apps allows the users to locate other users on the GPS tracker feature in most smart phones. Often the user can speak to strangers and do not necessarily need to have them as a contact to start with. Not all of these apps have age restrictions.

There are hundreds of apps available for people to download and it only takes a moment. Each of these apps carry their own dangers when used incorrectly and leave the user open to huge dangers. Norfolk Constabulary investigate many incidents of online grooming, sexting and malicious communications daily which have involved young adults on these apps.

I am confident that you will work with the High School and the Police to ensure that your child participates correctly, safely and appropriately online. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via my work mobile or the Safeguarding team within the school. Also, if you require more information or advice to keeping your child safe online, please view the High School website or go to the Norfolk Constabulary website.

Yours Faithfully,

James Harding
Police Safer Schools Officer

We will answer letters within 10 working days, where information is available.
Where this is not possible, an explanation will be given for any delay.



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