

Child Safety Online:

Why children use social media

- Entertainment
- Belonging
- Confidence
- Popularity
- Self-esteem
- Expression



A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media

Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; and if children never face any risks, they never learn how to deal with them. By helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

Understand the risks children may need to deal with

What they could see or do:

- Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual and pornographic content
- Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
- Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia and suicide
- Over-sharing of personal information
- Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

Who they might meet:

- People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
- People posing behind fake profiles for:
 - Mischief-making
 - Sexual grooming and stalking
 - Blackmail and extortion
 - Identity theft and hacking

How this could affect them

- Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
- Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
- Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
- Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
- Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to handle
- Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future

