



ADOPTTEENS




Internet Safety Guide







www.adopteens.org.uk

Pew research centre says that 94% of teenagers use a mobile device to go on line daily. Social media has dramatically expanded the amount of their lives that teens can live online. And while social media allows teens to keep up with friends and family, even across vast distances, a lot of life’s dangers have followed them online as well.

Remember, social media is designed to convince users that they’re a part of a community. And while they do function as virtual communities, it’s easy to forget how many people can be privy to online conversations between friends. That’s why many teens may, without thinking, reveal vital information of the kind that’s most useful for ID theft and other criminal acts. Beyond that, wherever kids congregate, there’s a possibility for hurtful or inappropriate behaviour, and the virtual world is no different.

We asked members of the youth council about social media, what they use and why and what they think about its safety and how other young people can stay safe. All of our young people we asked use social media except one member with TikTok and Instagram being the most popular. Here are the main social media and gaming sites they use and what they said about each one.

 Tik Tok	TikTok	Members talked about it being bad for grooming, and how anyone can just message you and private accounts are not private enough – They stated that anyone can search for any ones name and it will show up. Members talked about it being addictive with some of their parents banning people from using it because they were spending too much time on it.
	Instagram	Members felt it was one of the safer ones with most having an Instagram account. However, some didn’t understand the privacy setting or how to make their accounts more private.
	Facebook	Only a few members had this, but out of all of them they felt this was the safest if you set up your privacy setting correctly. They talked about Facebook set up requiring you to use a picture of your face to confirm who you are which meant it make it’s harder for people to setup fake accounts because you have to align quite a lot of information (age, gender, picture) although still not overly difficult. Some who had Facebook accounts didn’t use their face on their profile and used a more obscure picture and changed their names.

	Twitter	Only a couple of members had Twitter as they found it confusing and difficult to use.
	Snapchat	Seems to have fallen out of favour – Instagram and Tik-Tok are more popular or in favour at the moment.
	Zoom	Members talked about the recent media coverage of it being unsafe. Members used it for our meeting, but nobody talked about using it outside of that.
	Microsoft Teams	Members felt Microsoft Teams was safe because many of their parents used it.
	Fortnite	Some members played this game and felt the pressure to buy packages and how easy that can be to do if parent's cards are set up to devices.
	Roblox	Some members used this and discussed how you can't see who you're playing with because everyone is an animated character. This means you could be talking to anybody.

When discussing how parents can help them stay safe our members said:

- Having the trust and support from parents is helpful although they are aware not all young people have those types of relationships with their parents where they can have honest conversations about how they are using social media and what they are sharing.
- Explaining why you want to be on social media to your parents is probably a good starting point- most people want to join social media just because their friends are on it. It's a fear of missing out, so it might be that young people can find alternative ways to stay in touch with friends, text, FaceTime etc. and that if they want to take pictures and share videos, it can also be done with their close friends.
- Discussions around keeping safe online in a non-judgemental way and making a plan with the young person if there is a problem. You don't want to go to your parent with a problem if you think you're going to be shouted at, judged or made to feel ashamed/ stupid for what you've done on social media.
- Young people said they understood their vulnerability to wanting likes and followers on social media platforms, but didn't always do what was in their best interests around this. The likes are addictive.
- Members suggested that if you're Under 16 that parents should follow their children on social media although they did state there is then the tendency for young people to set up another account in a different name to avoid being seen by parents.
- Parents being involve in the setting up of the privacy accounts and parental controls on the phone is important for young people new to phones and social media.
- Ultimately all members agreed that no social media is safe.