

## Social Media (including potential risks)

**Social media** – refers to the means of interaction (via Internet-based applications) between people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It is now a popular method of communication for all ages particularly the younger generation who are digital natives. It is open to abuse eg cyber-bullying and online sexual predators. Internet safety has been promoted within schools and young people are encouraged to ensure their profiles are private where possible.

The following is a summary of some of the popular social networking sites and relevant features. SMART phones allow intersite connections ie most of the social media sites interlink eg a twitter account will link to the facebook page

**Facebook** was founded in February 2004 and allows anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the website. Users are expected to use their true identity. They can create profiles with photos, lists of personal interests, contact information, and other personal information. Users can communicate with friends and other users through private or public messages and a chat feature. They can also create and join interest groups and "like pages" some of which are maintained by organizations as a means of advertising. Current crazes include

- **Hot or not videos** – where a user posts a video of him/herself rating his/her friends as hot or not
- **Request to rate for looks or personality** – and friends then score them out of 10
- **Vine** (founded in June 2012) is a mobile app owned by Twitter that enables it's users to create and post short video clips with a maximum clip length of six seconds and can be shared or embedded on social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook.
- **Bitstrips** (created in 2008 and then in Sept 2012 an APP) are instant comics starring yourself and your friends. You design cartoon versions of yourself & your friends and can decide how you look and the size of your 'bits' You can use it to show how you are feeling on FB and can enact scenarios by putting your friends in hilarious comics where anything can happen. It has the potential for abuse.

**Twitter** (launched in March 2006) is an online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read "tweets", which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Registered users can read and post tweets but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device app.

**Flickr** (launched in March 2006) is an image hosting and video hosting website, owned by Yahoo! Inc. In addition to being a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, the service is widely used by photo researchers and by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media.

**Tumblr** (launched Feb 2007) is a microblogging platform and social networking website owned by Yahoo! Inc. The service allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog. Users can follow other users' blogs, as well as make their blogs private. Users can also question anonymously.

**Ask.fm** previously Ask Jeeves (launched on June 16, 2010) is a Latvia-based social networking website where users can ask other users questions, **with the option of anonymity**. The site has become associated with numerous instances of cyberbullying, some of which led to suicides, particularly in teens. The site has courted controversy by not having workable reporting, tracking or parental control processes, which have become the norm on other social media websites. Several major companies have since severed links with Ask.fm

**Instagram** (launched in October 2010) is an online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, apply digital filters to them, and share them on a variety of social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr and is supported by SMART phones. Users are also able to record and share short videos lasting for up to 15 seconds. It is common to hashtag pictures to get an increased number of likes. The collection of likes has become a recognised sign of popularity and vice versa

**Snapchat** (launched in September 2011) is a photo messaging app available on most SMART phones. Using the app, users can take photos, record videos, add text and drawings, and send them to a controlled list of recipients. These sent photographs and videos are known as "Snaps". Users set a time limit for how long recipients can view their Snaps ranging from 1 to 10 seconds, after which they will be hidden from the recipient's device and deleted from the Snapchat server. Users are informed by text whenever one of their snaps has been viewed or not, and whether it has been 'screenshot' or not. It is possible for the user to bypass this mechanism, for example, taking a picture of the phone with another camera, or by disabling the notification function or running the Snapchat application in an emulator will bypass all restrictions. You can frequently see youngsters taking 'selfies' and snap chatting them to their friends.

A **hashtag** is a word or a phrase prefixed with the symbol #. It is a form of data tag. Short messages on microblogging and social networking services such as Twitter or Instagram may be tagged by putting "#" before key words, either as they appear in a sentence, or appended to it. Hashtags provide a means of grouping such messages, since one can search for the hashtag and get the set of messages that contain it eg #naked or #gay. Hashtags in instagram are used to group photos and are a way to get more 'likes'. Hashtags can also be used before certain words to accentuate feelings etc

**Facial recognition technology** allows users to put names to the faces of people in photographs, and to then find other pictures of the same individual. Apps can allow you to find photos and to tag them as well as mixing and matching facial recognition across photo sources, including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Picasa, and more

**BlackBerry Messenger (BBM)** is an instant messenger application that allows messaging (and videos on newer phones) between BlackBerry users. They use the BlackBerry PIN system, so communication was only possible between BlackBerry devices until 2013. Newer versions allow the use of QR codes to add other users. It is common for young teenagers to promote their PIN on their own facebook page or ask friends to disseminate it for them.

**GPS navigation** applications for mobile phones include online and off-line navigation applications. This can be used for navigation and many SMART phones have features which give a constant read out of distance or time to get back to 'base' or other frequented venues. On purchase of a phone one can request that this feature is switched off. Because of the time taken to load, many people prefer to have it switched on constantly. This means that others can see where the individual is when posts are made or can build up a pattern of their movement over certain days.

**Find your phone setting / App** – most SMART phones come with an inbuilt 'find your phone setting' so that you can locate your phone when lost by typing your number into a friends phone (and inputting your phone ID). You can then locate your phone. This would also mean that another person can track your movements if they know your phone ID eg if the phone has been given as a gift (common in grooming etc)

**Meet-ups** – It is common to arrange 'meet-ups' with groups you have met on the internet eg through Tumblr, and the details of the arrangements can then appear on feeds of friends on interlinked social networking sites. This has potential for a sexual predator to arrange a chance meeting with a person he is grooming or 'following'

**Sexting** is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video on their mobile phone, usually in a text message. Surveys reveals 60 per cent of young people have been asked for a sexual image or video and 40 per cent have created an image or video of themselves. One of the terms used is **Dick pic or tit pic** – which is a request to send a photograph of breasts or genitals

'**Zipit**' is ChildLine's first app which provides tools to defuse the pressures of sending self-generated explicit images or videos. The free app offers witty images to send instead of explicit ones, advice for how to engage in safe chat, what to do if you feel threatened or if an image becomes public, and a direct link to call ChildLine.

**Chatrooms** – there are a variety of popular chatrooms that young people are currently using that offer the opportunity to talk to complete strangers. This can allow genuine friendships to develop but are equally open to abuse

1. **Omegle (talk to strangers)** is a popular free online chat website (launched in 2008) that allows users to communicate with strangers without registering. The service randomly pairs users in one-on-one chat sessions where they chat anonymously via text or with webcam, Users can search for 'strangers' with common interests by using the optional 'search interests' tab and can also link their facebook likes as interests. There is an unmoderated adult alternative section. The use of the mandatory chatnames "You" and "Stranger", the "Talk to Strangers!" slogan of the site, and prompts such as "Your conversational partner has disconnected" at the end of a chat appeared to fuel the popularity of the site.
2. **Chatroulette** is an online chat website (launched in Nov 2009) that pairs random people from around the world together for webcam-based conversations. Visitors to the website begin an online chat (text, audio, and

video) with another visitor. It is usual to commence with 'ASL' ( ie age / sex / location) until one finds a 'match', At any point, either user may leave the current chat by initiating another random connection. It is possible for one user to cover or disable their camera in order to 'hide' their identity.

3. **Zumbl** is an online chat service where users can converse with strangers anonymously. Users "tag" each other on the basis of their conversations, which are indicative of their personality and get reflected in their avatars. Zumbl builds your pseudo anonymous identity and further matches users with strangers who share common interests.
4. **Tinychat Company** (launched Feb 2009) is an online chat website that allows users to communicate via instant messaging, voice chat, and video chat. It offers thousands of chat rooms and the ability for users to create their own virtual chat room on any topic or category.<sup>[2]</sup> Tinychat is a web-based system that works on any system with either Adobe Flash or the Tinychat iOS app installed. The chat rooms can contain a rolling maximum of 12 video feeds and dozens of audio feeds at the same time. A person can choose to converse in multiple rooms at once. Tinychat, including all of its services, is owned by Numerl LLC, a privately held company founded in 2008 and based in New York City. Tinychat claims 5 million minutes of usage per day, making it one of the largest voice and video chat communities on the internet today.

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