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Online Safety Guide for Parents & Carers

TikTok

Key facts – What is it?

- *TikTok is a social media app. It is not new, previously operating under Musical.ly up until 2007, after which it was bought and relaunched as TikTok*

- *Users create a short video clip of up to 60 seconds,*

- *It is most popular with young people under 16, with an age restriction of 13.*

- *Once the app has been downloaded users have instant access to videos, however, in order to comment, like or share users must create an account.*

- *Users can sign up via linking their social media platforms or create entirely new accounts by inputting their social media platforms or create entirely new accounts by inputting a mobile phone number or an email address.*

What are our current concerns?

- When users sign up to TikTok their account becomes public by default. The obvious concern here is young people having open profiles, and their interactions on the platform being exposed and accessible to anyone.

- Young people posting videos and offering up personal information – e.g. posting videos while wearing school uniforms.

- There is an issue with young people being exposed to, or viewing, sexual content. As well as hearing in appropriate language or posting inappropriate videos themselves.

- Various video challenges are currently circulating on the app, encouraging young people to do dangerous and/or inappropriate things.

- Users, especially young people, do not know how to report concerns through the app, or engage elsewhere for help.

- TikTok does not have strong enough policies in place regarding user privacy and security or sharing information.

- Young people are also spending large amounts of money on the app and its features.

Although TikTok has updated their policy so only users aged 18+ can purchase, share and receive gifts, the minimum age limit to host a live stream is still only 16. Which is confusing.

Keeping safe on TikTok – what should we be doing?

- Remind young people and parents to set accounts on TikTok to private.

- Communicate with young people around what is considered 'safe and unsafe' to post online.

- Make sure you ae embedding critical thinking work within your curriculum – it is vital young people are challenging and questioning what they see, and interact with, online.

- Educate young people on how they can report their concerns online, and who can help.

- Advise parents to sit, discuss and walk through TikTok with their children – i.e. you can set up a 'family safety mode' within the app. Support young people in making safe connections online.

- Support parents by helping them set boundaries regarding their children's online use and behaviours.

- Please don't assume all children use TikTok the same way. Ask young people regularly where they are going online, and how they are using it.