

Go to

## Social Media - Hidden risks & Decoy Apps!

The internet offers many great opportunities for our children and young people to learn, play games, keep in contact with family and friends and access help & support.

However, sometimes things aren't always as they seem & it is important we are aware of the dangers that can be hidden in plain sight!!

Remember, what you see isn't always what you get!

<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>

**Age restrictions** - Most social media sites are officially 13+ age, however, many children sign up when they are much younger!

Unfortunately, there are adults who create fake profiles pretending to be a child or young person so that they can engage with children and young people online, for predatory reasons.



13+

**Image editing tools or filters** - can distort reality, resulting in convincing photos or footage that never actually happened!



**Decoy Apps (also known as vault, safe or secret apps)** - look like normal apps, for example, a calculator. However when a passcode is entered it allows access to lots of other information that has been stored secretly!



**Facebook Secret Conversations** - this secret messenger feature allows hidden conversations in an encrypted space that no one else can view.



<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/facebook-secret-conversations#:~:text=You%20are%20able%20to%20have,to%20iOS%20and%20Android%20users.>

<https://www.safes.so/blogs/vault-apps/>

**Online scams** - these have become more common in recent years and also much more sophisticated! Unfortunately children are often the victims of online scams as they can be more trusting and believe that what you see is what you get.



<https://www.ecpsafeguarding.co.uk/safeguarding-resources/Online%20Scams%20-%20What%20you%20need%20to%20know.pdf>

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

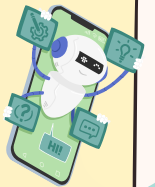
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**Emoji's / slang / abbreviations** - It can be difficult to keep up with these as they are forever changing and developing. Most emoji's are a fun way of communicating, however, it is important to recognise that some have a hidden harmful meaning.

Remember,  
what you see  
isn't always  
what you get!

[https://www.kidsonlineworld.com/uploads/1/2/3/1/123169829/emojis\\_explained.pdf](https://www.kidsonlineworld.com/uploads/1/2/3/1/123169829/emojis_explained.pdf)

**Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)** - this rapidly evolving technology has become more popular, particularly ChatGPT (or Alchatbot as it's also known). It can provide many positive opportunities for young people but there are safety risks to be aware of. For example, AI Chatbots can provide suggestions of how a victim could be bullied.



<https://www.childnet.com/resources/cheat-sheet-generative-ai/>

### How to reduce risks:

**Communicate** - talk with your child openly about online activity / habits.

**Educate** - make them aware of the dangers of online interactions.

**Monitoring** - tools and apps like Bark, Quostida or Family Link can help monitor online activity.

**Vigilance** - spot decoy apps. Check for duplicate apps / review app permissions and hidden folders.

\*(**For Androids** - go to settings on phone, tap privacy or Apps & Notifications, select permissions manager (or App Permissions) you'll see categories, tap each one to see which apps have access, remove or allow permissions).

\*(**For iPhone (ios) Devices** - open settings, tap privacy & security, you'll see categories, tap each to view and manage which apps have access - you can see and change permissions for apps).

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