

Information on Aps that have been used for CSE/Inappropriate messaging

The below list of mobile based aps which have been shown to be used in cyber-enabled crime, in some cases in relation to CSE offences or inciting a minor. The aps have not been set up for this purpose but it may be beneficial for parents/carers/social workers/teachers to be aware that the aps listed have been utilised in this way.



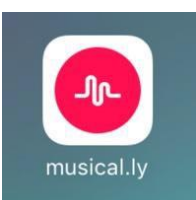
Kik messenger is a free app that allows users to chat, exchange photos and videos with friends and other users in the UK and worldwide. It is particularly popular with teenage users as anyone can sign up from the age of 13, and it allows user accounts to be set up without formal phone numbers/identification/age verification. This allows older users to create accounts where they can pose as younger people to allow them to engage with younger members. There's a lack of parental controls, records and chats are easily deleted.



OoVoo is a free app that allows picture exchanging, video chat and instant messaging from devices or through Facebook. You can group video chat with up to 12 people at a time. It also allows groups to watch YouTube clips together and comment on them. Users can add 'friends' in a similar way to Facebook, they can search for other users through email, name or can search by location. In the UK, it is against the T&C's to sign up under the age of 13 but not illegal. To block a user requires keeping them on your 'friends' list, removing them doesn't stop them from contacting you directly.



Chatroulette is a website which lets you talk to another person anywhere in the world. When you go onto the site, Chatroulette connects you to someone at random. You can talk to people via video or text. Registration only requires your date of birth, you can move a conversation on but can't guarantee that person won't be able to talk to you again. There are limited and very basic privacy settings and the site has access to your webcam and mic settings.



musical.ly is a video community that allows you to create, share, and discover short music videos. Videos can be up to 15 seconds and users can sing, dance, or lip sync along to music. Users upload their own material which bypasses vetting. There is also a search function which can bring up inappropriate material from a seemingly innocent search phrase. Users can have a 'fan list' of people who rate their videos and they can ask others to rate their material.



Live.ly is a live video streaming platform created by musical.ly. It is live video streaming in a social networking app and allows users to broadcast live videos to online friends. Users log in with their musical.ly, Facebook or Twitter account. Live.ly gives users free reign on what they want to share with fans and allows users to communicate in real time, picking from a variety of categories, including makeup, life, sing, dance, etc., to tag in their live videos. Privacy settings are there but have to be proactively sought out and are easy to switch off. There is also a location feature, indicating to other users where you are streaming from.



Whisper is a social 'confessional app' that allows users to post whatever is on their minds along with an image. A way to anonymously share feelings with pictures and words, and if so desired, connect with individuals through a messaging option. The app's appeal is based on anonymity, however user's locations are revealed. There is no filter on subjects that can be discussed and the messages that can be sent between users.



Yik Yak is a social media app that allows users to interact anonymously with other users who are nearby (<10 mile radius). The app's users can be found using the location settings on their phone. The app allows users to contribute comments on any subject, with voting in favour or against allowed. The app comes with a warning for under 18's but can still be accessed by younger people without difficulty.



Meet Me is a free app that connects users to other people based on location. Users are connected with strangers who are located nearby and may share similar interests. Once chatting you have the opportunity to discuss any topics, exchange messages, pictures or videos, or arrange to meet up. Sign up just requires name, email address, gender and date of birth and users are allowed to sign up from the age of 13. This can be bypassed by using a quick signup through Facebook.



MyLOL is a teen dating app that allows users to make friends nearby or anywhere around the world. The app recommends content is viewed by people aged 16+ but becoming a user is open to anyone between the ages of 13-25. MyLOL uses a similar format to Facebook with private messaging systems, news feed and a wall to post pictures/updates and comments. All profiles on the app are public so can be searched by any user, users are also sent lists of other users to connect with.



Rando 4Me is an app that allows you to easily exchange photos with strangers all over the world, you simply take a photo, send it and one will be sent back to you. Rando 4Me bills itself as 'Anti-Social Media' because it doesn't require conversation or linking in with people to send/receive images. As there is no way of knowing where your photo is coming from or going to it is difficult to apply restrictions on content.



Periscope works in conjunction with Twitter and lets you broadcast and explore the world through live video. It allows users to make comments directly to the person filming and give feedback to what is being filmed. Users sign up via an email address and create a username, the username can be anything at all provided it hasn't already been used. Twitter does not require you to enter any age details and when first launched the age rating to sign up for Periscope was 4+



Palringo is the world's largest network of mobile gaming communities. The app lets you chat and play games with people from all over the world. You can chat one-on-one, play a range of games directly in your group chat, create your own group or join one of the already user created communities. There are concerns around predators who may use the app to meet children. The app can also lead to discussing about inappropriate topics.



Hot or Not is a rating site that allows users to rate the attractiveness of photos submitted voluntarily by others. The app also shows you a list of the 'hottest' people nearby. You can also send messages via the app if you get a match. There are concerns around potential predators and fake profiles being set up by underage children as the app doesn't verify age.



Blendr is a dating / flirting app used to meet new people through GPS location services. You can send messages, photos and videos via the app. There are concerns around the fact that there are no age restrictions and that membership is open, free and internationally available.



Roblox is a gaming site for kids and teens creating adventures, role play and learning with friends. There is also a chat feature allowing users to send messages to each other. Concerns around children and teenagers being groomed or asked for naked images/videos.

These apps have caught the attention of the police as part of ongoing investigations. They have potential risks in that they allow people to access to users who they may not ordinarily feel comfortable approaching or conversing with. It is very easy for young people to sign up, and very difficult in trying to keep a record of interactions.

This list is by no means a comprehensive guide but is to provide an overview of some of the newer, or lesser known apps that may not be known to the wider public. It is always beneficial to be aware of what type of technology is freely available through smartphones, laptops and tablets to use legitimately but can also be used for sinister means including grooming children.



Other, more commonly known and used apps include: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, Youtube and Skype. It is important for children to understand when using any of these applications, that somebody's profile on there may not be a true reflection of who they are, and that some people may wish to use these apps for activities that they were never intended for.

If you would like further advice about signs to look out for, or some help in how to try and make sure that any security settings that are on these apps are used correctly there is help and advice available.

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/social-networking/> - have a guide to safe internet use and a specific area based on social networking, blogging and instant messaging.

<https://www.thinkuknow.com/> - National Crime Agency backed website which breaks down information into separate areas for children, young people, parents and professionals.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/> - have information on how to properly utilise parental controls and broaching the subject of difficult topics with children. There is also an advice line that you can call if you have any questions.

Staying safe online is vitally important and being aware of some of the tactics used by criminals to exploit vulnerable people can help prevent them from being successful. The dangers of online grooming are very real and the consequences can be tragic. How serious the consequences are can be seen in [Kayleigh's Love Story](https://leics.police.uk/categories/kayleighs-love-story). (<https://leics.police.uk/categories/kayleighs-love-story>)

The short film outlining Kayleigh's story can be viewed [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsbYHI-rZOE). (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsbYHI-rZOE>)

Please be aware that the content of the video may be distressing for some viewers and if it were to be displayed in cinemas it would be given the rating of 15A.