



SOCIAL MEDIA APP BULLETIN – December 2018

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This document contains apps/websites of note that have appeared in Child Sexual Exploitation or Abuse cases in the South West region. The document may also contain apps/websites that are prominent in other regions or are believed to be an emerging issue.

If you have any apps you believe may be used in the facilitation of CSAE please send an email to the above address.

This bulletin is for use within your own organisation and for staff only. Not to be shared with outside agencies however can be used for parental bulletins. If in doubt if this can be shared please send an email to the above address.

FaceTime

FaceTime is a video calling app that uses the internet to make calls making this a free way of contacting people if using Wi-Fi; the app is similar to Skype and WhatsApp etc. The app was developed for iOS, an operating system used for mobile devices manufactured by Apple and can be used on a range of apple devices such as iPhone, iPad and even Apple Watch. This is not available on android devices.

Contact can only be made with people you already have a mobile number for. The required age to use this app is 13 and over however there are no specific restrictions in place. You can block contacts from contacting you via FaceTime as you would any typical unwanted phone call on a smart phone. The blocking feature allows you to block calls (including video) and messages from unwanted contacts.

Case Study

A 12yr old boy had been in contact with an unknown male over 18yrs who he described as a “gaming friend”. They exchanged contact details to keep in touch via FaceTime. Whilst on FaceTime video during a gaming session the suspect has exposed himself to the victim. The victim immediately terminated the video call and told his mother.

If you’re using an iPhone, FaceTime automatically registers your phone number; this can easily be changed under the settings function.

Further information on FaceTime settings can be found on the following site <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT204380>

Chatstep

Chatstep is a website that allows users to create and/or enter an online chatroom, this is expected to be made into an app for android and ios. The site can however be easily accessed on a mobile device via the internet.

Chat logs are not stored allowing users to message privately and share photos easily. All nicknames, messages and images are encrypted on the users’ device before they are sent to the website.

A chatroom can be created on the website by a user; the user can create the chatrooms name and add an option password. Anyone can join an open chatroom and invites can be sent out to password protected chatrooms. The chatrooms can accommodate up to 50 users and uploaded data is deleted when you leave the chatroom.

The site is aimed at individuals aged 18 or over. Due to the anonymity and encryption this leaves the site vulnerable to the sharing of indecent images. Individuals are also at risk of cyberbullying, there is a method to report unwanted contact and there is an option to “mute” the unwanted contact.

Holla

Holla is a random chat app that matches people in video chats around the world. The app is available in both ios and Android and is aimed at individuals over 18. Users under the age of 13 are not permitted under the app rules, however there are no restrictions in place to prevent this; Holla asks that users report any underage user accounts.

Special effects include filters, video effects, and match random people via interests, the special effects make the app appealing to young people.

There are several similar random chat apps available and have featured in cases of indecent exposure of adults towards children or suspects grooming children to facilitate indecent images of children.

Safety features include a report button is featured on the video chat screen and user profile screen and Holla utilizes artificial intelligence visual recognition software to monitor its community 24/7; the software automatically scans for inappropriate behaviour and immediately bans any users with suspicious behaviour. It's not known how effective this software is and moderators of the app are required to review all banned and flagged activities.

Details of the app can be found on the website <https://holla.world/>

Case Study

A 12yr old girl has been using the chat application Holla. An older unknown male has connected with her via the app and has indecently exposed himself to her despite knowing her age.

Below are a number of resources to help educate adults and young people around the issue of online safety and app security:

The **UK safer internet centre**; where you can find e-safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online. For help and advice contact: 0344 3814772 or helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

The **Revenge porn hotline**; the only organisation providing such a service in the UK, providing support and advice to the victims of the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and cyber-enabled blackmail (known as sextortion). <https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>

POSH (The Professionals Online Safety Helpline); The Professionals Online Safety Helpline is a free service for all professionals and volunteers working with children and young people. It provides signposting, advice and mediation to resolve online safety issues staff face about themselves, such as protecting professional identity and online harassment, or problems affecting young people, for example cyber-bullying or sexting issues. Where appropriate we can also provide advice or facilitate in the removal of harmful content. POSH have created good relationships with many of the giant tech companies and are a great place to start if you have any concerns with a particular site or App.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline>