Social Media App Bulletin

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This document contains apps/websites of note that have appeared in Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation 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.

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For use within your own organisation and for staff only.
Not to be shared with outside agencies.

Can be used for parental bulletins.

Please email the below mailbox if further advice is required

SWROCUStrategic@avonandsomerset.police.uk

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Wickr

Wickr is a communications app similar to Whatsapp. Users are able to communicate 1:1, in groups of up to 10 people and can share files, images and voice call.

All messages are end to end encrypted making the content shared secure, other security features include a virtual "shredder" where the app overwrites deleted content and an expiration timer can be set on messages to delete, this is a similar feature to snapchat.

The app can be used on several devices such as phones, tablets and desktops making it easily accessible. The app does not link to contacts already stored on the device allowing users to have a separate contact list for this app.

The app is aimed at users aged 13 or over however there is no age verification in place, according to the developer website any users discovered to be underage will be removed from the app.

Further information and frequently asked questions can be found on the website https://wickr.com/

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Goodnight

Goodnight is a random voice-chatting app that allows users to talk to random users for free. Purchases can be made on the app to connect to others faster. Users can add their interests and language to their profile; this information is used to match with other likeminded people. The app will match users from all over the world for a 7 minute call. Users can decide whether they want to keep in touch via message after the initial call.

Goodnight do not specify age restrictions on their website however the Apple App Store have given this an age rating of 17+ and Google Apps have stated this as 18+, this is due to nature of the app and the potential for users to be exposed to mature content. There is no age verification process in place for this app.

The app icon features a cartoon cat which is likely to be appealing to children and young people, at a glance the icon could also be deceptive to guardians.

Further information can be found on the website http://goodnight.io/

Case Study
A parent contacted police after discovering the app on her 13yr old daughter's phone, messages were seen between her and an unknown male suspected to reside outside of the UK. The male had asked her daughter for pictures which she sent to him, none of these were intimate images.

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Kik

Kik chat app 'involved in 1,100 child abuse cases'
BBC News
21 September 2018

Kik Messenger app to shut down
24 September 2019

Kik has been seen in the media recently over reports that it will shut down on this month to focus on other projects.
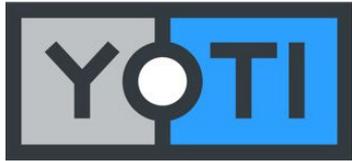
The app has been used by criminals to facilitate several child abuse cases all over the UK including the South West region. Users are able to join anonymously on the app without giving a phone number. The anonymity feature on the app causes delays in discovering many of the suspects involved which may leave others at risk of becoming victims.

The app is still live and has several million registered users. The shutdown date has been announced as October 19th through media reports however it is unknown whether any last minute changes will be made.

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ChildLine and the Internet Watch Foundation have come together to provide a service where children can request the removal of sexual images of themselves which have been shared online. As part of that process the child would be asked to provide a link to where the image is stored online, rather than send the image itself.

The child is also required to verify their identity and age and this is done through the YOTI app. YOTI will not store images of the child's ID following the verification process.

Below are a couple of online resources which contain details regarding this service:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting - There is a section which covers what you can do if you've lost control of a sexual image and refers to the YOTI app.

https://contentreporting.childline.org.uk – This is the portal where you can report images and videos for take down and again refers to using the app to verify age.

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

SWGfL has launched a reporting centre to assist the public in reporting online abuse and harmful content. The service provides up to date information on community standards and direct links to the correct reporting facilities across multiple platforms.

Advice is provided on online issues such as bullying, harassment, threats, impersonation, unwanted sexual advances, violent content, suicide, self-harm and pornographic content. ***Report Harmful Content Online*** *https://reportharmfulcontent.com/*

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).

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 on 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.

UK Safer internet centre   Professionals Online Safety Helpline   Revenge porn helpline   Protecting young people from online grooming

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