



JANUARY 2025

# Online Safety & Media Literacy report Update

*"It doesn't matter what we talk about today . . . there will always be something else!"*



**Secure  
Schools**



# Early Years

## 0 to 3 years

- ▶ Lack the skills to process information they see in a complex way.
- ▶ Digital device is a plaything.

## 3 to 5 years

- Starting to develop a sense of right and wrong.
- Start learning to think about how others feel, and the social rules they are meant to follow.
- Mostly unaware of the dangers they may encounter.
- Not yet ready to self-manage their tech.



Education from  
the National  
Crime Agency

# Lower Primary (6 to 9 years)

- ▶ Starting to manage their thinking and emotions.
- ▶ Learning about the complexities of relationships and start to *'hero worship'* others.
- ▶ Curious about how things work. Technical skills will often outpace their judgement.
- ▶ Frequent users of technology but have limited online safety knowledge or critical thinking skills.
- ▶ Accessing unwanted and unsuitable content can be upsetting.



Education from  
the National  
Crime Agency

# Older Primary/Lower Secondary

## 10 to 13 years

- Aware of social pressure and expectations.
- Critical thinking is developing, but often unaware of their '*digital footprint*' and not concerned about privacy.
- Don't understand how apps and platforms are designed, and their impulsivity is perfectly matched to the reward loops designed into tech.
- Don't really consider long term consequences of actions and can get caught up in online drama, spreading things quickly.
- The importance of image means social media starts to play a big role.



Education from  
the National  
Crime Agency

# The Social Web



**Viewing**



**Sharing**



**Chatting**



**Friending**



# Social Web – Viewing



## Social web: Viewing

### Benefits

Opportunity for children and young people to:

- Be entertained
- Learn
- Get information and support

### Potential harms

- Anyone can post and share content
- Inappropriate, sexual or violent content online
- Content shared with the intention of harm/grooming

# Social Web – Sharing



## Social web: Sharing

### Benefits

Sharing pictures and videos can be:

- Fun
- Creative
- Way to express themselves

### Potential harms

- It's easy to share online
- They can feel pressurised, uncomfortable or blackmailed
- Unintended impact on others from sharing content



# Social Web – Chatting



## Social web: Chatting

### Benefits

- developing social skills
- fun of talking to new people
- being part of a community that is supportive

### Potential harms

- Sharing too much personal information
- Inappropriate, sexual or violent conversations
- Pressure to do or say something they don't want to



# Social Web - Friending

Use arrow keys or mouse to move toolbar

## Social web: Friending

### Benefits

- Maintaining existing friendships
- Making new friends who have similar interests
- Sharing experiences

### Potential harms

- The person may not be who they say they are
- Unhealthy friendships
- Pressure to do or say something they don't want to



Ofcom



# Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report

2024



Ofcom



# OFCOM Media Literacy Report 2024

## Children aged 5-7 are increasingly active online:

- ▶ Messaging and video calls (65%, up from 59% in 2023).
- ▶ 11% of 5-7 year-olds are now using WhatsApp on their own mobile phones.
- ▶ Social media use – YouTube main platform (38%, up from 30%).
- ▶ 32% of parents report that their 5-7-year-olds use social media independently.
- ▶ Livestreaming apps – TikTok main platform (50%, up from 39%).
- ▶ Gaming (41%, up from 34%).
- ▶ 15% of 5-7s are now playing 'shooter games' like Fortnite (*up from 10% in 2023*).



# OFCOM Media Literacy Report 2024

- ▶ By age 11, 90% of children now own their own mobile phone.
- ▶ Viewing of live TV dropped by 14% from 2023 for children aged 4-15.
- ▶ 85% of parents report children use TV sets for films, but short video snippets online via tablets, phones or game consoles now dominate children's consumption.
- ▶ Gaming is a central activity for children, with 90% engaging in gaming across different devices.





# OFCOM Media Literacy Report 2024

- ▶ Half of children under 13 use social media platforms, despite minimum age requirements.
- ▶ 31% of 8-11-year-olds have used a fake age to access apps/sites.
- ▶ Children are more likely (62%) to be "*passive*" users of social media rather than "*active*" users who share, comment, or post.
- ▶ 39% of children upload their own videos online, with TikTok now being the most popular platform for doing this.
- ▶ 64% of children who game online chat with friends/acquaintances through the games, but 31% also chat with strangers.



# Children's Feedback



93% of children recall at least one online safety lesson at school, with 97% of those who had regular lessons finding them useful.



More than 1/3 of children had seen something worrying or nasty online in the past 12 months.



35% of children feel their own screen time is too high.



Only 1/3 children knew how to use online reporting functions and only 14% had ever used them.



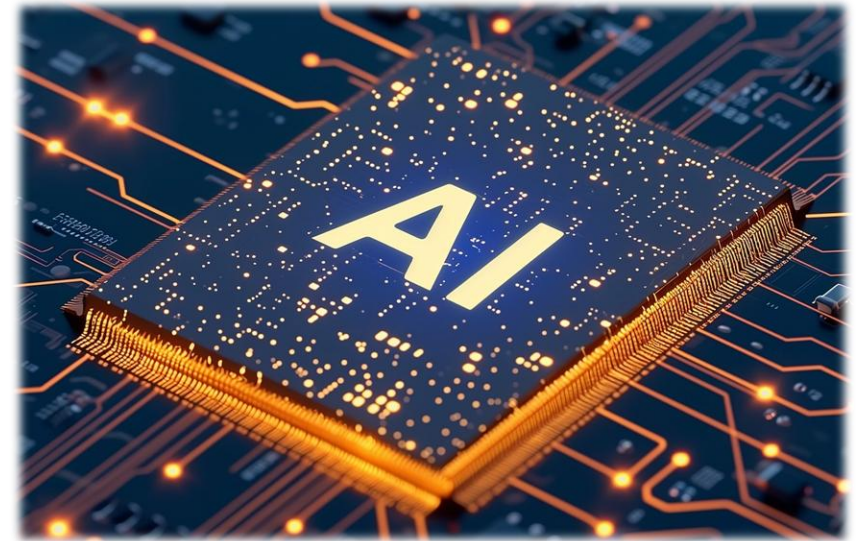
# Ofcom Media Literacy Report 2024

- ▶ 65% of children say the online world is beneficial for building and maintaining friendships.
  - ▶ *For neurodiverse children many of their 'friends' are online and are people they have never met in person.*
- ▶ 40% of children report people are often mean or unkind whilst online.
- ▶ 87% of children feel pressure to be popular online.
- ▶ Girls are more more likely than boys (20% vs 14%) to receive hurtful messages online.



# Ofcom Media Literacy Report 2024

- ▶ 44% of 8–11-year-olds are aware of algorithms used to target content.
- ▶ 46% of children who know about algorithms are *"happy for apps to use information about them to decide what to show"*.
- ▶ 33% of children aged 8-11 have used AI technology, whereas only 23% of adults aged have done so.
- ▶ Top uses of AI by children are for fun (45%) and learning and schoolwork (36%).





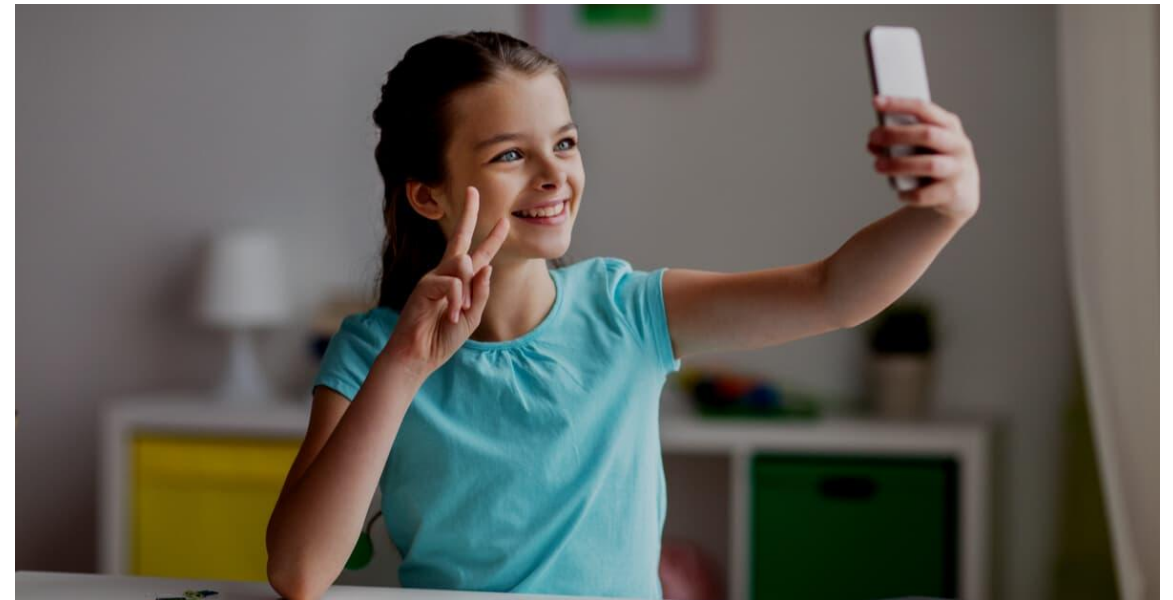
# Live Streaming

- ▶ Live Streaming is a visual broadcast live over the internet. Videos are unedited and are viewed in real time, similar to live TV.
- ▶ People engage more with live videos. Live videos hold users' attention 10-20 times longer than pre-recorded, on-demand content.
- ▶ Popularity of live streaming videos is increasing. The use of Instagram's "Live" feature grew recently by 70% and about a quarter of TikTok users use the platform daily to tune into a live stream.
- ▶ Research from Ofcom found that six in ten (57%) children and young people aged 8-11 use streaming apps or sites to watch or post/share content. However, only 15% live-streamed their own videos.



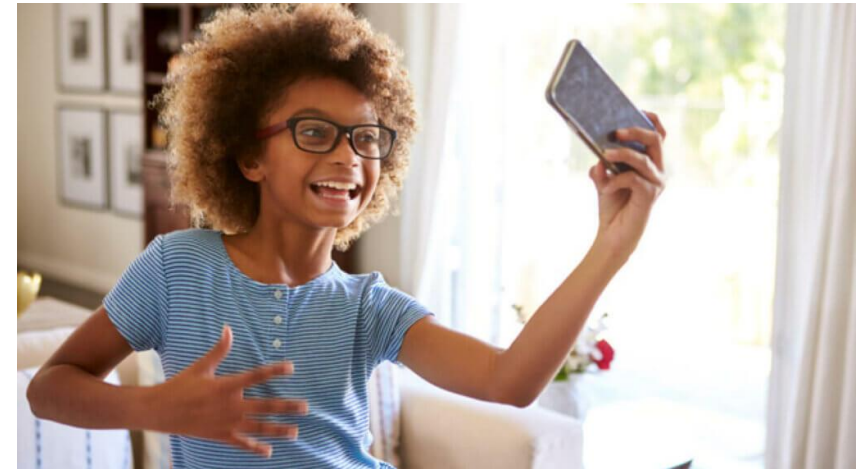
# Why do Children Share Live Stream Content?

- ▶ Sharing videos instantly and live can feel exciting
- ▶ Showcase talents
- ▶ Campaign against issues
- ▶ Spontaneously share their thoughts with an audience
- ▶ Show events like music concerts
- ▶ Tutorials e.g. putting on makeup and explaining what they are doing whilst doing it



# Dangers for Children Viewing Live Stream Content

- ▶ Exposure to inappropriate or harmful content via live streaming.
- ▶ Content can be uncensored and spontaneous.
- ▶ Content can have a harmless title or description yet contain offensive or harmful content without the viewer realising.
- ▶ The host of the livestream might feel bullied or pressured to do something in the moment by comments from viewers that they might not feel comfortable doing.
- ▶ Young people might feel more confident or comfortable sharing things online than they would offline.



# Dangers of Live Streaming

- ▶ Live streaming provides ease of access for perpetrators to engage with children and young people.
- ▶ Comments on live streams aren't moderated and can be viewed by everyone; young people could see upsetting or harmful comments.
- ▶ Viewers can also screen record or take screenshots of the live stream, even without the host's consent.
- ▶ 1 in 20 'live streamers' have been asked to change or undress.





# Habit / Reward Loops that encourage regular interactions with games

