Live streaming is the term used to describe the broadcast of a real-time video from a mobile device, tablet or games console. Many live streaming apps have the functionality for interactions from viewers, such as commenting, live chats and sending reactions during the broadcast. Live streaming opens up a world of excitement for children, where they can watch live concerts, their favourite celebrities and bloggers/vloggers, connect with their friends, watch live gaming and much, much more. Whilst there are many positives with live streaming, it creates a worldwide platform for unsuitable content to be streamed and creates a host of dangers for children.

98% of child sex abuse live streaming victims are **13 or under**

IWF Internet Watch Foundation

BIGO LIVE 13+ | Facebook 13+ | Instagram 13+ | Youtube 13+ | Periscope 13+ | Steam 13+ | Twitch 13+ | YouNow 13+ | live.me 13+ | live.ly 13+

What parents need to know about LIVE STREAMING

SIGN UP PROCESS & AGE RESTRICTIONS

Most live streaming apps have the age restriction of 13 and above. It is important to note that some platforms do not require proof of age when signing up to the app, meaning that anyone can register an account. This also opens up the opportunity for people to lie about their age to seem older or younger.

RECORDINGS OF YOUR CHILD

Each streaming app and website that allows live streaming has different rules about how they store their live videos once completed. For example, a live stream on Periscope will be automatically deleted after 24 hours but apps such as Facebook and YouTube allow the video to be posted on the app afterwards and will only be deleted once the creator decides. It is important to know that deleting a video will not stop it from being shared. A live stream can be recorded (or screenshots can be taken) by other viewers using certain softwares and then shared on other platforms. According to research conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), they found that the apparently recorded illegal videos of live streams were redistributed on other sites.

WHO IS WATCHING YOUR CHILD?

If your child's privacy settings are not set up effectively, anybody can be watching their live streams. One of the main characteristics of live streaming is its ability for videos to be instantly shared all over the world, but this creates the opportunity for more people to watch anybody.

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD WATCHING?

Live streaming apps don't just allow children to stream their own videos, they can also watch other people's streams. Anything can be streamed, at any time and any place, including violence, graphic imagery, nudity, illegal behavior, drug use, profanities etc. Most live streaming apps claim to monitor live streams and will take action to stop any that do not adhere to their guidelines. But, with millions of live streams each day, it makes it extremely difficult to monitor every one.

LIVE CONTENT

As the streams are live, children can be exposed to something inappropriate instantly. Most live streaming apps will have filters, rules and guidelines in place to ensure that their services are monitored. They will also have report buttons where inappropriate content will be sent for review. Keep in mind that a report may not be dealt with instantly which means your child will be further exposed to inappropriate content during a live stream.

GROOMING

There have been recent reports of paedophiles coercing children as young as 3 on live streaming apps. Due to the anonymous nature and lack of identification needed to sign up to some apps, almost anyone has the opportunity to sign up and use the service. Users can use fake identities to sign up to the apps and watch/stream videos. Recent research by the IWF revealed that children may be asked to do things and perform 'suggestive acts' during their live stream by strangers.

NOS National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents

PROTECTING THEIR 'REP'

What your child does now may affect their future opportunities, and it is important that they have a good understanding of this. As the videos are live, it may lead to the misconception that whatever happens in the video will disappear once the live stream ends. This is incorrect. Talk to your child about how what they stream cannot be undone and has the potential to affect their online reputation.

REMOVE LINKS TO OTHER APPS

Some live streaming apps/websites give users the ability to link and share the content through other social media platforms to share their video further. For example, a live stream on Periscope, can be shared on Twitter and Facebook during the stream, if the accounts are connected. While this may seem like a good idea to show the video to more people, the privacy settings may differ on each app, opening up the opportunity for unwanted viewers to join the stream. We suggest checking the privacy settings on each app and where possible, only streaming on one app at a time to have more control over who sees the live stream.

TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

Ask your child what live streaming apps they are using and how they are using them. Are they watching live streams or making their own? What types of live streams do they like watching? If they are under 13, it is strongly advised that they are not using any live streaming apps due to the dangers involved, but you may feel that your child should not be using the apps even if they are over the age limit. With live streaming such a popular feature on apps, it is important that you are aware of the dangers associated with live streaming to effectively protect your child.

BE PRESENT

In a recent study by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) over a 3 month period, 96% of streams showed a child on their own, often in their bedroom or bathroom. If your child is going to conduct a live stream, ask them if you could be present for it. This will give you an opportunity and a better understanding of what your child is doing during their live streams and who they are streaming to.

PRIVACY SETTINGS

Each live streaming app will have its own privacy settings with options varying from platform to platform. Generally, we advise that your child's account is set to private. This will ensure that only their friends/followers will see their live stream. It is important to check each app to ensure that the privacy settings are in place to protect your child from strangers viewing their streams and engaging in conversation with them. Most apps settings will allow you to turn off the chat feature during a live stream, restricting conversations, but live chat is part of the 'fun' when it comes to live streaming.

PROTECT PERSONAL INFO

Your child may unknowingly give away personal information during a live stream, including their location. Talk to them about what constitutes as 'personal information' and make sure they do not disclose anything to anyone during a live stream, even to their friends. Advise them to remove any items in their live stream (school uniform, street name, posters etc.) that could potentially expose their location or information about them.

Sources

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This is not a definitive guide. Please always check with the app's support information to see if your security and privacy concerns are addressed.