Live Streaming: Responding to the risks

Live streaming is a live visual broadcast over the internet. All you need to be able to live stream is an internet enabled device, like a smart phone or tablet, and a platform (such as website or app) to broadcast on. At the click of a button, you can be streaming to hundreds, or thousands, of viewers.

With the popularity of live streaming ever increasing and with children and adults both taking part, it is important as a parent or carer to understand what risks children and young people may face when live streaming and the practical steps that you can take to make your child's online experience safer.

What makes live streaming risky for children and young people?

Reduced inhibition online – Children, like adults, can feel more confident when they are online as they feel somewhat protected by the screen. This can result in children engaging in behaviour that they would not otherwise do in 'real life'.

Your child's developmental stage – dependent on their age, your child will need different levels of support. Children's brains are continuously developing and your advice will need to grow as they do. In their offline world, children are often taught from an early age to do as they are told and follow adult instruction e.g. parents, teachers, family friends. Some offenders within live streaming platforms rely on the acceptance of this 'rule' and use young people's trust in adults to abuse them.

Live streaming is 'in the moment' – Children and young people often do things in the heat of the moment and act on impulse without thinking of the consequences – just like offline. For example, they may share personal information when asked or do things that in another situation they wouldn't do, such as share something private or even sexual. Our work with young people has shown that they often do not see live streaming as something tangible and so they may share things that they wouldn't share via a photo or pre-recorded video.

Tactics such as trickery and flattery – Offenders use tactics to try and get children to do things that they otherwise may not do. Trickery can be used in the form of games that often start

off 'innocent' and then build up to trick a child into taking their clothes off. Live streaming platforms also often allow users to 'gift' emoji's such as love hearts and coins and this can enable adults to manipulate young people into doing things through flattery and the promise of gifts.

Affirmation in abundance – Lots of positive comments and compliments can make children feel good. Primary aged children tend to want to please others and can be tricked into doing things by the threat of losing their followers (the people watching and commenting on their live stream). Affirmation and acceptance is also very important to children developing a stronger individual identity as they move into their teenage years.

How can you help your child stay safe when live streaming?

There are some practical steps you can take to help keep your child safe if they are using an app or website with a live streaming function.

Stay involved in their internet use – Talk to your child about what they are doing online; what they are enjoying, what they are learning, who are they interacting with and the new things they have discovered. Parental engagement in the positive aspect of being online and not just the risky things will help your child to talk more openly about their internet use, including anything that worries them. Having these discussions often is more effective than having 'one big chat'.

Use webcam and devices in public spaces. As young people develop, they often seek more privacy and autonomy in both their online and offline world. However, it's important to consider whether children are developmentally ready to be left unsupervised using devices. Young children do not have reasoning skills to keep themselves safe independently, especially when overpowered by the intelligence and manipulation of offenders. A known risk factor is when children use live streaming platforms in their bedroom or bathrooms unsupervised. Therefore, it's important that if primary aged children are using apps with any communication function that they are being supervised by an adult and are not in a private space.

Privacy and safety settings - If your child is using an app with a live streaming function go through the privacy and safety settings together, setting them to make sure only the friends they know in 'real life' can view their profile. You can view guides on some of the popular live streaming sites on the Thinkuknow website – www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/support-tools/How-to-guides

Be wary of requests to chat in private – Offenders may try and move children from a public area of an app to a private area to have conversations that are likely to be less moderated. Remind your child to be wary of people they meet online who want to chat to them in a private away from other people.

Build resilience - You can help build your child's resilience and self-esteem through conversations and activities that are not based on validation from online 'fans' or views. For primary aged children this can include highlighting when your child has been nice or kind to a sibling or friend.

Safe and trusted adults and advice - Help your child to identify adults that are there to help from ones who they do not know or that may want something in return. As your child gets older they may look to the internet for information and advice. Support them to identify trusted sources on the internet, versus places where they should be more cautious. Reinforce the idea that on the internet, adults should be offering advice and supporting young people to make their own choices, usually via professional and well known organisations.

Make sure your child knows where to go for support and where to report - Children can sometimes feel they are to blame if something goes wrong online. Remind your child that they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if they are worried no matter what may have happened. Talk to them about reporting directly within the app or platform they are using and that they can report to CEOP if they're concerned about contact from an adult.

Reporting to CEOP

If you are worried about someone your child is in contact with online you can find information and advice and report these concerns directly to CEOP by visiting the CEOP Safety Centre at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre. If you feel your child at immediate risk call the police on 999.

This information has been adapted from the Thinkuknow parents and carers website – **www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents**

Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency CEOP command. The CEOP command works to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation both online and offline. Thinkuknow offers a range of safety information for children, young people, practitioners and parents/carers

The CEOP Safety Centre offers information and advice for children and young people, parents/carers and professionals on reporting child sexual exploitation and abuse and provides a route to report directly to CEOP – **www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre**.