



Fake Profiles

It is easy to lie online and there are many fake online profiles on social media and gaming accounts. It can be difficult for children to spot a fake profile, (even adults can be caught out), and fake profiles are used to make contact, befriend, groom, bully, obtain personal information, spread viruses and to encourage young people to behave in ways they normally would not.

What do I need to know?

Although your child is probably too young for social media accounts, they may have come across profiles through online gaming. This is an environment which is frequented by paedophiles and it is important to teach children only to be friends online with those they know and trust in real life. They should be aware of the ability of people online to trick and mislead. They should be sceptical about what they read in an online profile and be cautious before interacting with anyone online. They should know that just because someone says they are a friend of a friend, that is not a reason to trust them.

Would you believe:

In 6 months during 2017/18, Facebook disabled over 1.3 billion fake accounts!

What to talk about with your child

- ★ Talk about people online and the fact that not everyone is who they seem.
- ★ Remind them that the safest types of friends to have online are those they know and trust in real life.
- ★ If they have a gaming account, go through their Friends Lists and contacts to make sure that they know them in real life. Ask them to tell you a bit about each one and how they know them.
- ★ Working together, secure all your child's online accounts by checking and setting the privacy levels to reduce the risk of inappropriate contact.
- ★ Check that your own child's profile does not reveal more personal information than necessary.
- ★ Remind them of some of the warnings signs that someone might not be who they say they are: *they seem too good to be true; they are too complimentary/flattering; they promise gifts or treats; they send lots of messages.*
- ★ Reinforce the message that **something's not right if:** *someone is rude or threatening; they ask you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable; they want to know too much about you; they ask you to keep them secret.*
- ★ Reassure your child that everyone makes mistakes and although it may be difficult, it is important to ask for help if they have made unsafe choices online. It's 'Never too late to tell'.