Dear Parent/Carer's

E-Safety briefing: Snapchat and SnapMaps

You may or may not be aware the social network application "Snapchat" has announced a new feature – "SnapMaps" which has been already been rolled out to users. For those of you who are unaware, Snapchat is a mobile application, which allows users to take photos and videos and share them with others. Snapchat is very popular with older children and teenagers in particular.

The new "SnapMaps" feature allows users to share their location with others on their "friend" list, which can be viewed in real time. Each user is represented on the map by a cartoon "avatar".   The SnapMaps feature means that is essentially possible to see exactly where a user is any given time.

There are clear e-safety implications here, since it may not either safe or appropriate, for a user to make their location known to others. The location data used by the app is very accurate, meaning that users could potentially narrow the location of another user down to a street or even a specific address. Whilst most usage of this feature is likely to be innocent, it does provide opportunities for users to build up a picture of home addresses, travel routes, schools and workplaces.

We would strongly urge youngsters who use SnapChat to follow some simple rules, to ensure that their usage is safe. If your youngster makes use of SnapChat we would suggest that you discuss this with them

- Only share your location with people you know in person. Never share your location with strangers.
- Don't add contacts to Snapchat if you don't know them in person.
- Regularly review your settings and take an active decision about whether you want people to know your location. Remember you can switch this off at any time.
- Think about where you're sharing your location. Location services such as Snap Maps can lead people to your house. Think about what times you're on the app and whether these are locations you want to share – if not, then turn this off within your settings

Youngsters can minimise the risks of using Snapchat, by ensuring that app is not sharing the location. There are two ways of doing this:

- In the app "Settings" > see my location > then switching location sharing to OFF (this is known as "Ghost Mode")

- ON SNAPMAP: Choose "Settings" > then switching location sharing to OFF

If you would like more information about Snapchat and SnapMaps, online safety organisation ThinkUKnow have published some guidance which can be found here https://goo.gl/uCruAD

I hope that you find this information helpful and that you and your family enjoy a happy and safe summer

Kind regards
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