



Safe At Summerhill

At Summerhill School we are committed to Safeguarding our children and young people as well as promoting positive well-being for all.

This Safeguarding newsletter, aims to help staff, parents and students alike to be aware of the safeguarding and mental health issues, giving you useful links and resources to use if you have concerns. If you have concerns or ideas for future topics please do not hesitate to contact us on the main school number 01384 816165 or via email on studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

Content about suicide, self-harm and eating disorders to be hidden from kids on Instagram and Facebook

Instagram and Facebook will hide content about suicide, self-harm and eating disorders from children, says the social media platforms' owner Meta. Under the new rules, users aged under 18 will not be able to see this type of content on their feeds, even if it is shared by someone they follow. Users must be at least 13 to sign up for Instagram or Facebook. The platforms will instead share resources from mental health charities when someone posts about their struggles with self-harm or eating disorders. Teens will be automatically placed into the most restrictive content control setting on Instagram and Facebook, which makes it more difficult for them to come across sensitive content.

Parents Mental Health Day – 27th January

What is Parent Mental Health Day? stem4, a charity that supports young people to build positive mental health, is proud to be the UK founder of Parent Mental Health Day, which started in 2022. The Cost-of-Living Crisis, which so closely followed the pandemic, and increased concerns about digital harms, rising rates of mental ill health and the impact of stretched services have further increased parent and carer anxiety and, in some cases, helplessness and hopelessness. Parent Mental Health Day 2024 is an opportunity for parents and carers to acknowledge and discuss their struggles and share in their achievements of connecting positively with each other and the whole family, and to learn ways to connect positively to maximise young people's mental health. If you would like to look more into this and the charity stem4 please visit this link - [stem4](#)

What Parents and Carers Need to Know about MyLOL

Teenagers' blossoming interest in romantic relationships and their devotion to online networking is a potent combination – and, regrettably, not always a safe one. It raises all kind of worries about the possibility of sharing intimate images or deeply personal information; and that's simply with contacts their own age – to say nothing of the chance of connecting with an older stranger.

MyLOL – a site which specifically facilitates interaction between 13 to 19-year-olds – has amassed around a million users worldwide, but sadly its safeguarding protocols can't match that level of success. The ease with which an adult could pose as a teen under a bogus birthdate makes grooming a realistic threat – and that's far from the platform's only risk, the guide below explains.



Mrs Sprouting
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Randle
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Ms Gordon
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Quirke
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Cresswell
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

MYLOL

AGE RESTRICTION
13-19

MyLOL is a free social networking and dating site aimed at teens. Profiles can publicly display users' images and information, including sexual orientation and personal interests. The service bills itself as "the number one teen dating website in the world", claiming to have more than a million users globally. Despite its popularity, the MyLOL app is no longer available from Google Play or the App Store, although the site is still active. In some countries, police forces and schools have previously warned parents about "sinister predators" and "inappropriate activities" on the site.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

FLIMSY AGE GATES

Although MyLOL states it is exclusively aimed at users aged between 13 and 19, there is no credible age verification system to prevent a younger child – or an older adult – from signing up to the platform. Coupled with the fact that it's impossible to establish a user's true identity on MyLOL, this raises a serious concern that the site could be used for grooming.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

MyLOL maintains that it monitors all uploaded images for nudity or sexual content. It also claims to be able to detect suspicious keywords. However, there have been numerous reports of explicit content being found on the platform, with users often posting provocative, semi-nude pictures of themselves and engaging in flirty or sexually explicit conversation.

POTENTIAL CYBER-BULLYING

MyLOL lets users 'vote' on other people based solely on their appearance, much in the same vein as the now-defunct site Hot or Not. This feature could easily lead to distress and bullying, especially if a young person's profile pics receive an unfavourable response. Various reviews of MyLOL have noted that bullying frequently becomes an issue in the platform's chat groups and private messages.

IN-APP SPENDING

MyLOL is free to join and use, but it also offers paid-for memberships. Users who have paid money get their profile promoted at the top of the site and in search results. They can also earn additional credits for increased engagement with the platform – such as sharing, replying to messages and voting. At the time of writing, the monthly membership fee was \$9.95 (just under £9).

DATA COLLECTION

According to its privacy policy, MyLOL collects user data including email addresses, contact details and interests. While the company says it is committed to protecting users' privacy, the small print states that information may be shared externally. MyLOL claims to follow procedures to keep data secure, but does not specify what these procedures are, or whether such information is encrypted.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

MyLOL makes it easy to connect with strangers. In fact, the site's rewards feature encourages users to send private messages to people they don't know. There have been several media stories of adults posing as teens on MyLOL to connect with minors, which could lead to extremely dangerous situations, such as a young person meeting up with someone who has been posing under a false identity.

Advice for Parents & Carers

DISCUSS ONLINE DATING

It's vital to talk to your child about the possible dangers of platforms like MyLOL – particularly the threat of online predators. Remind them of the risks of sharing intimate images and information with strangers and emphasise that most people don't realise they're being 'catfished' until it's too late – it really isn't wise for a young person to meet up with someone they've only spoken to online.

EXPLAIN PRIVACY RISKS

Before your child begins using a service such as MyLOL, it's important that they understand the potential pitfalls of giving out their personal data on this type of platform. Explain to them, for example, that they shouldn't divulge any personally identifying information to people who they don't know, as scammers can be quite convincing when attempting to steal someone's identity.

RESTRICT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child has access to a bank card or other payment method, they may be enticed into signing up for MyLOL's premium features. Having their profile boosted and receiving more attention could be especially tempting if their friends also use the site. You could consider altering their device's settings to disable internet purchases, or at the very least keeping an eye on their online spending.

SET UP LOCATION ALERTS

If you're worried that your child may be planning to meet up with someone they've met on MyLOL, you could consider utilising GPS or WiFi location tracking technology to follow their whereabouts in real time. You can even set up a virtual boundary or 'fence' and opt to receive an alert to your phone if your child enters or exits a specified area.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



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