

# Underage social media use 'rife' in Surrey

**Eagle Radio and OPCC report reveals 85% of 11-12 year olds using apps restricted to 13+, with 5% online dating.**

The results come from more than **7,000 children** who received Social Media legal training in the first half of the school year (Sept. 2016 - March 2017). Data was gathered during **81 sessions** at **26 secondary schools**, including independent and special schools. More than **300** teachers also benefitted from the training, run by Eagle Radio Ltd. and funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey.

Key findings include:

- Up to **85% of Year 7s** (aged 11-12) are using apps and websites restricted to those aged 13+, such as Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube and Minecraft.
- **5% of Year 7s admitted to using online dating apps or sites.**
- Up to **50%** of students into **online gaming** admit they play with strangers online.
- 98% of Surrey pupils own their own smartphone during their first year of secondary school.
- **Year 9s** (13-14 year olds) are the age group most likely to use social media apps to **communicate with strangers** and to **post content anonymously**.

Education about the risks of social media was recently described as 'as vital as reading and writing' in a House of Lords report (**Growing up with the Internet, 21 March 2017**). Findings from the Surrey project show more work needs to be done to inform students' understanding of law and ethics online:

- More than half of students thought an **Islamophobic tweet** was more likely to result in 'likes' and 're-tweets' than criminal charges.
- Half of students did not realise sending a **racist tweet** could lead to a prison sentence.
- **One in three** wrongly thought **sharing indecent images** was legal for over 16s (instead of 18+).
- More than **three quarters** of students thought an **underage victim of revenge porn** would be arrested by police herself, if she had sent the images in the first place.
- Students said they felt a **ban from social networking sites** would be **worse than going to prison** as a punishment for online crime.

Course designer and City, University of London researcher on youth cybercrime, Holly Powell-Jones, says: *"It's shocking that social media law and ethics isn't compulsory in all UK schools, as this project shows how easily 'out of touch' adults can be with the reality of children's digital lives. We all share a responsibility to ensure young people learn how to use the Internet safely, responsibly and legally, as early as possible"*.

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, David Munro, says: *"As the internet and social media continues to evolve, so must the education we provide to young people on how to use it safely and responsibly."*

*"Often young people don't appreciate the consequences of what they post on social media and can easily fall foul of the law."*

*"This project has a crucial role in informing them about the risks they can encounter using social media, online gaming and dating sites and helping prevent them from landing in potential trouble online."*

A full detailed report with infographics is available on request.  
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## Information for journalists:

- The 'Online and Social Media Law and Ethics' schools project is now in its fourth consecutive year of delivery across Surrey, reaching on average 9,000 pupils each year\* across state, independent and specialist secondary schools. It is delivered by professional youth media tutors from Eagle Radio's Learning team and funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey.
- A total of **7,234 pupils** (aged 11-18) received direct training between September 2016 – end of March 2017. **310 school staff** benefitted from direct training. **81 sessions** were delivered at **26 schools** across the county. Every school was also issued with a Resource Pack detailing the law, key case studies and useful links.

## Breakdown of data on 'underage' app use (dataset = 870 pupils)

App & age restrictions	Description of use	% use among Year 7s (aged 11-12 years old)
Instagram (13+)	Photo sharing	85%
WhatsApp (16+) Kik (13+) Viber (13+) ooVoo (13+)	Messaging apps	85%
Snapchat (13+)	Share messages, videos and photos	81%
YouTube (13+)	Video sharing	70%
Xbox Live (?) Miniclip (13+) Minecraft (13+) Twitch (13+)	Online gaming	59%
Facebook (13+)	Social networking	33%
Twitter (13+)	Micro-blogging	28%
Meow Chat(13+) Omegle (13+) Chat Roulette (?)	Chat to strangers	5%
Meet Me (13+) MyLOL (13+) Skout (13+) Tinder (18+)	Online dating, meet new people and teen dating apps	5%
Whisper (13+) Yik Yak (18+) Ask.fm (13+)	Anonymous posting	3%

The 'Online and Social Media Law and Ethics' project **remains the only initiative of its kind in the UK**, both in terms of scale and core media law content. The course is designed by a former journalist with a PhD specialism in youth cyber offending and is updated annually. It covers the law and ethics in relation to a variety of areas:

- Underage 'sexting' among under 18s
- Indecent images and 'revenge pornography'
- Hate speech and extremist/radical material online
- Cyber harassment, threats and abuse (cyberbullying)
- Malicious and offensive communications
- Libel (defamation)
- Privacy
- Reputation/employability
- Copyright

\***2013-14**= 45 schools – 9,315 pupils  
**2014-15**= 52 schools – 10,010 pupils  
**2015-16**= 43 schools – 7,682 pupils  
 (Mean average = 47 schools - 9,002 pupils)  
**2016-17** (7 months) = 26 schools, 7,243 pupils



**A full, detailed copy of the report is available on request via Paul Marcus: [Paul.Marcus@964eagle.co.uk](mailto:Paul.Marcus@964eagle.co.uk)**

Contact Eagle Radio (01483 300 964) for more information.

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