**What Parents & Carers Need to Know about INSTAGRAM**

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

**ADDITION**
Many social media platforms are designed in a way to keep us engaged on them for as long as possible. There’s a desire to scroll often more in-cases we’ve missed something important or fear of missing out. Instagram is different and young people can easily lose track of time by aimlessly scrolling and watching videos posted by friends, acquaintances, influencers or even strangers.

**PRODUCT TAGGING**
Product tags allow users (particularly influencers who are sponsored to advertise products) to tag a product or business in their post. This takes viewers directly to the product catalog page on the page where the item can be purchased and where children may be encouraged by influencers to purchase products they don’t necessarily need.

**EXCLUSION AND OSTRACISM**
Young people are highly sensitive to ostracism. Feeling excluded can come in many forms such as not receiving many likes, not being tagged, being unfriended, having a photo untagged, or not receiving a comment or reply to a message. Being excluded online hurts just as much as being excluded offline – with children potentially suffering in silence and feeling bad about themselves, feeling as if they don’t belong or are valued.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**
Product tagging on Instagram only works on public accounts. If you child wants to share their clothing style, makeup etc and tag items in a post then they may be tempted to change their settings to public, which can leave their profile visible to strangers.

**Advice for Parents & Carers**

**HAVE OPEN DIALOGUE**
Talk to your child about live videos and the risks involved and how they can do it safely with family and friends. Talk to them about ensuring they have a safe environment and together compose an environment of protection so they can have fun while on the platform.

**FAMILIARISE YOURSELF**
Instagram is one social media app which has its safety features available to parents in a user-friendly manner. This document provides examples of conversation starters, managing privacy, managing comments, blocking and restricting and can be found on the Instagram website or community parents.

**MANAGE LIKE COUNTS**
Due to the impact on mental wellbeing, Instagram has allowed users to change the focus of their experiences online away from how many likes a post has by hiding the like counts. Users can hide like counts on all the posts in their feed as well as hiding the like counts on their own posts. This means others can’t see how many likes they get. This can be done by going into settings > notifications > posts > likes > off.

**REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS**
If you’re happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which needs to be entered before making a payment. This can be added in the payment settings tab and will also help prevent unauthorised purchases.

**FOLLOW INFLUENCERS**
Following influencers will allow you to monitor what they’re sharing as well as being able to discuss anything which you deem inappropriate. Talk to your child about what they follow and help them develop critical thinking skills about what the influencer is trying to do. For example, are they trying to sell a product by promoting it?

**USE MODERATORS**
Instagram has launched ‘live moderator’ on Instagram live where creators can assign moderators. Moderators have the power to report comments, remove viewers and turn off comments for a viewership. This can lead to children feeling insecure about their appearance, questioning how exciting their activities are and having a fear of missing out.

**BE VIGILANT AND REASSURE**
Talk to your child about the use of filters. While they can be fun to use they don’t represent the real them. Use conditionality using a filter, ask them why and reassure them that they are beautiful without it. The use of filters can lead to children feeling insecure about their appearance, questioning how exciting their activities are and having a fear of missing out.

**BALANCE YOUR TIME**
Instagram now has an in-built activity dashboard that allows users to monitor and control how much time they spend on the app. Users can add a daily reminder to set a limit on how much time they want to spend on Instagram, prompting them to consider if it’s been too long with a ‘take a break’ message. There’s also the option to make notifications for a period of time. These features can help you have a conversation with your child about how much time they are spending on the app and to set healthy time limits.

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**Other Resources**

- **Advice for Young People on Instagram**
  - [https://www.ig4kids.com/](https://www.ig4kids.com/)

- **Follow Us**
  - [www.nationaonline.com](http://www.nationaonline.com)
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