What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SENDIT

SENDIT is an add-on to Snapchat, not a standalone app: it requires users to have an active Snapchat account, which they then connect to SENDIT. It’s important that trusted adults realize there, that any risks associated with Snapchat also affect children using SENDIT. Within the app, people play question games like ‘Truth or Dare’ and ‘Never Have I Ever’. Users select a question to share on their Snapchat story for their friends to reply to. All responses are anonymous, although — for paying subscribers — SENDIT reveals hints about who sent which messages.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ANONYMITY RESPONSES

Anonymous online encourages people to say things they wouldn’t normally say. They’re less accountable, and it’s harder to track who sent a message. Research has highlighted that children perceive anonymous messages as being more meant than if the same message had come from a friend. Any app that lets children communicate anonymously should be treated with caution.

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

Categories of questions such as “Ask me anything” or “Tell me” — coupled with the app’s anonymity — mean there is a likelihood of some friends or strangers (if the account is set to ‘public’) responding in a negative manner. These critical comments (especially if there is a few) could ruin a young person’s self-esteem, heightening their insecurities and affecting their mental health.

MEMBERSHIP COSTS

Currently costing £4.99 per week, SENDIT’s Diamond Membership offers access to a particular message, such as their appreciation of another’s type of phone used and any mutual friends. Membership also contains exclusive games and an ad-free experience. Young people may be curious to find out more about the app and therefore sign up for membership.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

If your child has already downloaded SENDIT, it might be wise to have a discussion with them about the impact that saying something anonymously has on others. Encourage them to think about how they would feel if they were on the receiving end of a particular message, reminding them to stop and re-read messages before sending could reduce the number of regrettable situations.

BLOCK IN-APP PURCHASES

Even if you do allow your child to use SENDIT, you might want to consider talking to them in advance about whether they really need a membership subscription. Either way, it’s probably simplest to make sure that in-app purchases are blocked in the settings, or that you have configured your child’s device to ask for your approval before making a purchase online.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Open-ended questions which relate personally to the sender are an opportunity for malicious people to send bullying and harassment. Additionally, bullies and trolls can hide behind the anonymity that SENDIT offers, feeling more powerful and able to intimidate their target — who, by contrast, feels hurt, victimised and helpless.

POSSIBLE GROOMING

If your child doesn’t have their Snapchat account set to private or they have previously added strangers as friends, there is a possibility of predators responding to their SENDIT questions. They are in an attempt to gather information about your child — to initiate a conversation with them, seeking ultimately to form an online ‘friendship’ and gain the young person’s trust.

REPEATED ENGAGEMENT

On SENDIT, users receive trophies for reaching a particular number of responses on answering friends’ questions and for posting their own. This sense of achievement could incentivise a young person to be active on SENDIT more frequently — spending more time on their phone or tablet as they may naturally want to collect all of the trophies or might be competing with their peers.

TALK IT OVER

Before allowing a young person onto a social networking app, it’s a good idea to chat with them about the possibility of receiving hurtful comments. They often say things they don’t mean; and that posts get misinterpreted. Teach your child not to reply to any offensive users on SENDIT and simply block them (via the three dots in the top right of the screen).

ONLY PLAY WITH FRIENDS

Stress the importance of your child playing SENDIT games only with their close friends and not having strangers on their contacts list. This should help to keep the nature of the questions light-hearted — and if the games are being played among a small group, it will be easier for the members to figure out who has sent comments if someone’s been left feeling hurt or uncomfortable by any responses.