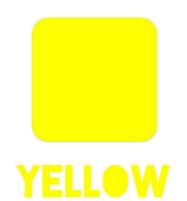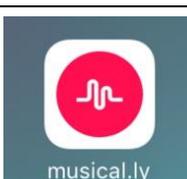**MERSEYSIDE POLICE**

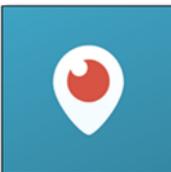# Cyber enabled crime – App briefing sheet

The following list of apps have been brought to the attention of Merseyside Police during investigations into crimes falling under the following recordings:

- Harassment
- Violence without injury
- Child sexual exploitation

- Grooming
- Inappropriate sharing of material

The apps have not been designed for this purpose but as is often the case, criminals utilising lax settings and attitudes to misuse them for illegal activities. This list is not exhaustive and does not include common, well documented Apps such as Facebook and Instagram. It may be beneficial for parents/carers/social workers/teachers this way. The first page will list the Apps that are newly brought to our attention or have been used most recently in Cyber Crimes on Merseyside.

App Logo	Name/Age	Why it is on this list?
YELLOW	**Yellow** **12+**	Labelled officially as an app to boost your following on **SnapChat** but has been described as 'Tinder for kids' or 'Teenage Tinder'. It isn't described as a dating app but had a very similar swipe/match format to the 18+ dating app **Tinder**. You connect to the app through your **SnapChat** account and from there can exchange messages, pictures and videos. Concerns over low access restriction settings and the potential for fake accounts to be set up to message vulnerable users. **SnapChat** system also makes messages difficult to trace.
	SimSimi **4+**	Chatbot app that uses aritificial intelligence to simulate human conversation. Chatbots are being increasingly used globally as a more personable approach to filling out enquiry forms or dealing with frequently asked questions. Concerns have been raised over sexual content and offensive language being used on their despite the young sign-up age restriction.
	Holla **17+**	HOLLA (formally known as **ChaCha**) is a random video chat app where you can meet people from all over the world. 'You never know who you're going to meet next with just one swipe.' Concerns around children using the app and potential sexual predators – recommended for 17+ but easy to bypass this.
V	**Oovoo** **4+**	App that allows picture exchange, video chat and instant messaging from devices or through **Facebook**. Group video chat with up to 12 people at a time. Groups can watch YouTube clips together and comment on them. Users can add 'friends' in a similar way to **Facebook**, can search for users through email, name or can search by location. It is against the T&C's to sign up under the age of 13 but not illegal. To block a user requires keeping them on your 'friends' list - removing them doesn't stop them from contacting you directly.
musical.ly	**Musical.ly** **12+**	App that allows you to create, share, and discover short music videos. Videos can be up to 15 seconds and users can sing, dance, or lip sync along to music. Users upload their own material which bypasses vetting. There is also a search function which can bring up inappropriate material from a seemingly innocent search phrase. Users can have a 'fan list' of people who rate their videos and they can ask others to rate their material.

Community first
preventing crime, protecting people

MERSEYSIDE POLICE

App Logo	Name/Age	Why it is on this list?
FML	**FML** **17+**	App linked to blogging site **FMyLife.com** allows you to submit your own story, comment on existing stories, have private conversations and there is a picture facility available too. There are concerns that the 'stories' may contain inappropriate material and there is a lack of control around the commenting facility.
kik.	**Kik Messenger** **12+**	App allows you to chat to users worldwide. Particularly popular with teenagers, accounts can be set up without formal phone numbers/identification/age verification. Groups are easy to join and self moderating so there is little content control. Easy to create 'anonymous' accounts where they can pose as younger people to allow them to engage with younger members. Lack of parental controls, records and chats are easily deleted.
chatroulette	**Chat Roulette** **18+**	Lets you talk to another person anywhere in the world. You are connected to someone at random and you can talk to people via video or text. Registration only requires date of birth, you can move a conversation on but can't guarantee that person won't be able to talk to you again. There are limited and very basic privacy settings and site can have access to your webcam and microphone settings.
LIVE.LY	**Live.ly** **12+**	Live video streaming app created by **musical.ly**. Allows users to broadcast live videos to online friends. Users log in with their **musical.ly**, **Facebook** or **Twitter** account. Users have free reign on what they want to share with fans and allows communication in real time, picking from a variety of categories, including makeup, life, sing, dance, etc., to tag in their live videos. Privacy settings have to be proactively sought out and are easy to switch off. There is a location feature, indicating to other users where you are streaming from.
W	**Whisper** **17+**	A social 'confessional' app that allows users to post whatever is on their minds along with an image. A way to anonymously share feelings with pictures and words, and if so desired, connect with individuals through a messaging option. The app's appeal is based on anonymity, however user's locations are revealed. There is no filter on subjects that can be discussed and the messages that can be sent between users.
YikYak	**YikYak** **17+**	App that allows users to interact anonymously with other users who are nearby (<10 mile radius). The app's users can be found using the location settings on their phone. The app allows users to contribute comments on any subject, with voting in favour or against allowed. The app comes with a warning for under 18's but can still be accessed by younger people without difficulty.
MeetMe	**Meet Me** **17+**	App that connects users based on location. You are connected with strangers who are located nearby and may share similar interests. Once chatting you have the opportunity to discuss any topics, exchange messages, pictures or videos, or arrange to meet up. Sign up requires name, email address, gender and date of birth and users are allowed to sign up from the age of 13. This can be bypassed by using quick signup through **Facebook**.
Live.Me	**Live.Me** **17+**	Live broadcasting app that allows you to make friends in your area and around the world. Videos are saved to your channel and there are rewards for increasing your followers, building a fan base, collecting virtual gifts & earn money. Concerns over no age registrictions, people can still look you up after you block them, lack of traceability, younger users being targeted.

MERSEYSIDE POLICE

App Logo	Name/Age	Why it is on this list?
	My LOL **17+**	Teen dating app that allows users to make friends nearby/anywhere in the world. App recommends content is viewed by people aged 16+ but becoming a user is open to anyone between the ages of 13-25. Uses a similar format to **Facebook** with private messaging systems, news feed and a wall to post pictures/updates and comments. All profiles on the app are public so can be searched by any user, users are also sent lists of other users to connect with.
	Rando **12+**	App that allows you to easily exchange photos with strangers all over the world, you simply take a photo, send it and one will be sent back to you. Rando bills itself as 'Anti-Social Media' because it doesn't require conversation or linking in with people to send/receive images. As there is no way of knowing where your photo is coming from or going to it is difficult to apply restrictions on content.
	Periscope **4+**	Works in conjunction with **Twitter** and lets you broadcast/explore the world through live video. Users make comments directly to the person filming and give feedback to what is being filmed. Sign up via email address and create a username - can be anything at all provided it hasn't already been used. Twitter does not require you to enter any age details.
	Palringo **17+**	App lets you chat and play games with people from all over the world. You can chat one-to-one, play a games directly in a group chat, create your own group or join one already created. There are concerns around predators who may use the app to meet children. The app can also lead to discussing about inappropriate topics.
	Hot or Not **17+**	Rating site that allows users to rate the attractiveness of photos submitted voluntarily by others. The app also shows you a list of the 'hottest' people nearby. You can also send messages via the app if you get a match. There are concerns around potential predators and fake profiles being set up by underage children as the app doesn't verify age.
	Blendr **17+**	Dating / flirting app used to meet new people through GPS location services. You can send messages, photos and videos via the app. There are concerns around the fact that there are no age restrictions and that membership is open, free and internationally available.
	Skout **13+**	Skout is a 'flirting app' that allows users to sign up as adults or teens. They are then placed in appropriate peer groups, where they can post feeds, pictures and chat. Users get notifications when other users in the area join and when someone 'checks' them out however points must be paid to see who it is. Concerns as there is no age verification.
	Omegle **13+**	Omegle is a social networking site that randomly connects you to another person who's on the site. It lets you talk to them in a 1-1 audio or video conversation. You can both appear as anonymous, unless you decide to share your personal information. Concerns over lack of registration/verification, inappropriate content readily available, no control over what/who you see.
	Roblox **12+**	Gaming app for kids and teens creating adventures, role play and learning with friends. There is also a chat feature allowing users to send messages to each other. Concerns around children and teenagers being groomed or asked for indecent images/videos.

App Logo	Name/Age	Why it is on this list?
	DeviantArt **17+**	Online social community for artists and art enthusiasts. You can post your art, 'follow' particular artists, comment and have your uploads commented upon, chat privately with 'friends' and favourite artists. There are concerns over possible inappropriate or sexual content, offensive material, rude comments and potential bullying.
	PopJam **9+**	**PopJam** allows children to create art, stories, photos and games and then share their creations with the world. They can also like and comment on others creations. There are concerns around social pressures; collecting 'likes' and followers, causing unhealthy attitudes / expectations about social media.
	Twitch **17+**	**Twitch** is a live video game website where you can live stream your own games and chat to other gamers. There are concerns around violent games, commentators using mature language and inappropriate advertising. There are also the usual risks around live streaming, including inappropriate and unpredictable content. There is a 'dark room' feature which contains adult content
	Voxer **4+**	**Voxer** is a free messaging app for smartphones that allows users to send real time voice messages, photos, GIFTS and text messages. There are concerns around cyber bullying, the sharing of content, strangers using the app for inappropriate behaviour and when you sign up the app automatically shares your location.

These apps have been brought the attention of the police as part of ongoing investigations. They have potential risks in that they allow people to access to users who they may not ordinarily feel comfortable approaching or conversing with. It is very easy for young people to sign up, and very difficult in trying to keep a record of interactions.

This list is by no means a comprehensive guide but is to provide an overview of some of the newer, or lesser known apps that may not be known to the wider public. It is always beneficial to be aware of what type of technology is freely available through smartphones, laptops and tablets to use legitimately but can also be used for sinister means including grooming children.

Other, more commonly known and used apps include: **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **Twitter**, **SnapChat**, **YouTube** and **Skype**. It is important for children to understand when using any of these applications, that somebody's profile on there may not be a true reflection of who they are, and that some people may wish to use these apps for activities that they were never intended for.

If you would like further advice about signs to look out for, or some help in how to try and make sure that any security settings that are on these apps are used correctly there is help and advice available.

https://www.getsafeonline.org/social-networking/ - have a guide to safe internet use and a specific area based on social networking, blogging and instant messaging.

https://www.thinkuknow.com/ - National Crime Agency backed website which breaks down information into separate areas for children, young people, parents and professionals.

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/ - have information on how to properly utilise parental controls and broaching the subject of difficult topics with children. There is also an advice line that you can call if you have any questions.

Staying safe online is vitally important and being aware of some of the tactics used by criminals to exploit vulnerable people can help prevent them from being successful. The dangers of online grooming are very real and the consequences can be tragic. How serious the consequences are can be seen in Kayleigh's Love Story. (https://leics.police.uk/categories/kayleighs-love-story)

The short film outlining Kayleigh's story can be viewed here. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsbYHI-rZOE) Please be aware that the content of the video may be distressing for some viewers and if it were to be displayed in cinemas it would be given the rating of 15A.