Live streaming: everything you need to know about the online phenomenon

What is live streaming?

Live streaming is the broadcasting of a real-time, live video to an audience over the internet. All you need to be able to live stream is an internet enabled device, like a smartphone or tablet, and a platform to broadcast on.

Why is it popular?

Livestreaming offers young people the chance to be creators and presenters of their own content, not just passive absorbers of other people's. The immediacy of it is also appealing. It is 'authentic' in that there is no editing process and viewers can follow along and comment in real time.

With platforms like YouNow, LiveMe and Periscope gaining an increasing following, the traditional social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have adopted livestreaming into their in-app experience.

livestreaming 1.PNG

What are the benefits?

It can help young people connect to others online, showcase their talents and develop their communication skills. Live streaming can build young people's confidence as audiences grow.

What are the risks?

Firstly, it is very difficult to moderate. Live streaming has been used to broadcast abusive and harmful behaviour, which means that children can stumble across inappropriate live streamed content they were not expecting to see.

Young people are also able to use their screens as a safety net. This creates a distance between themselves and the viewers which may mean that they feel more able to do things they wouldn't otherwise face-to-face.

Live streaming is also impulsive by nature. There is no way to edit what is shared. In some sense this can be liberating for young people, offering authenticity that people often crave but cannot be not found in other aspects of social media. However, live streaming runs the risk of a child sharing something private that they might later regret.

While live streaming can offer an initial rush of validation as viewers start to engage with a stream, it also presents a longer-term risk to young people's self-esteem as they are vulnerable to receiving negative comments.

Live streaming can endanger children's privacy. An absentminded slip up in creating a stream such as videoing whilst wearing school uniform or standing in front of the house can expose personal information that can put young people at risk.

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What can parents do?

It is important to have ongoing conversations with your child about how they communicate online. This can open a dialogue to ensure they know how to stay safer while livestreaming. Encourage them to be critical about what they are watching and what they like to share themselves. They should also know how to report directly to social media platforms if they see something distressing online.

How can you report something?

If you are worried about someone your child is in contact with online you can find information and advice and report these concerns directly to The National Crime Agency's Child Expoitation and Online Protection Command by visiting the **NCA-CEOP Safety Centre**.

If your child comes across inappropriate content while watching livestreams, you can contact the platform directly to report it.

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