Apps

(Applications or programs)

E-Sussex, E-Safe

Safeguarding all children in East Sussex all the time

East Sussex
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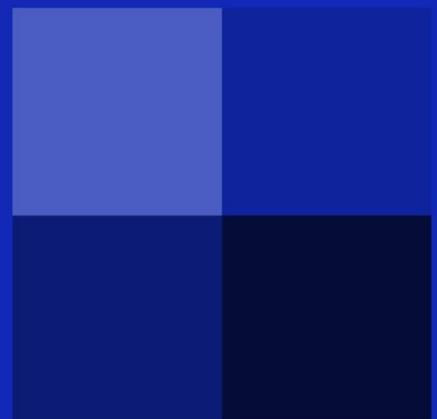
What is an "app"?
An application, sometimes called an "app" is a programme that can be installed on computers or mobile phones.

What do they do?
It is easier to ask what don't they do. They range in function from currency converters, to Global positioning systems, and "fun" applications such as the "iPINT". (This allows you to engage in a simple quiz on an iphone4 and once successful, your phone screen fills with a pint of lager which, if you tilt the phone, you can pretend to drink!)

Are they free?

Some are, but most carry a cost either to purchase outright or by subscription to a service, or by you having to part with information to get it. **Some apps use bandwidth – this can be very expeinsive.**

Can they put me or my child at risk?

As with most things on the internet, it depends how they are used. Basic email can be a risk if used badly. It would appear (at the time of writing) that Global Positioning apps can put people at risk. These apps can be installed and then linked to social networking sites such as Facebook and then linked to a mobile phone that has GPS capability. (Which is most of them these days). Favourite locations can be "tagged". While adult users may be careful in what they call their tags, children are more than likely to list "Home" or "School". Some of these applications can tell in real time where the user is. (Assuming they have their mobile phone on them at the time).

Sounds scary. What can I do?

First, you need to understand the particular application you are downloading and using. (Or your child, for that matter.) What does it do? Why do they want/need it? Is there any functionality about it that you do not like the look of?

And what if I can't find this information?

Then the short answer might be don't download the application. If the writer isn't prepared to tell you exactly what it does, then there may be a sting in the tail somewhere.

Actually, I would like to know where my child is at any given point.

So would most parents! But as with anything, children find ways around it. You may install a GPS system on your child's mobile phone linked to yours, but all they need to do is leave the phone somewhere, or give it to a friend for a while. Children are resourceful. They will find a way of avoiding things they are not comfortable with.

How many "apps" are there?

At the time of writing, about 40,000 and rising at a rate of about 400 a day!

Why would manufacturers give these away for free?

Why indeed! Sometimes they are nothing more than marketing ploys, but sometimes the app is linked to other forms of selling. You may find a "basic" app that is free, but has limited functionality. You may then receive texts inviting you to buy the full version.

How much do these things cost?

It varies quite a lot from a matter of £1.00 upwards. Remember, though, that tunes bought through itunes only cost around 75p each. It is amazing how quickly this mounts up. 100 tunes equals £75.00

Do these apps collect user information?

Some do, some don't. The point is that some are not too clear on whether they do or do not.

Is there an End User License Agreement for them?

Yes there is. As with all software, you are not buying the rights to the source code, you are buying the right to use it. Most End User License Agreements (EULA) require the user to undertake not to decompile it in any way, but that is not the point here. Most EULAs are truly massive. (Be honest, have YOU ever read one through?) In it, it should state exactly what the product does and what rights both you and the company enjoy as a result of entering into it. In the company's case, this may or may not grant them a right to use your personal information.

Do young people want the latest applications?

When do they not? There will be peer pressure around apps just as there is around Facebook and whether they are wearing the "right" trainers.

The Facts
- The number of applications is growing fast. Each and every week some 400 new ones arrive on the market.

- **This kind of development costs money. There is always a cost either in money up front, or in the transfer of data.**

- Children LOVE gadgets and apps. They will want the latest one, even if that means upgrading their phone to get it. Some e-safety experts are suggesting that this is pump-priming to stimulate a more rapid upgrade of mobile phones. You need the latest phone to run the latest app.

- **Be honest about what apps you want or need. Encourage your youngsters to be discriminating users.**

- There is no such thing as a free lunch.

- **Adult users can be caught out just as easily as young people.**

- Check your privacy settings everytime you add an app to your phonethat links to your social networking site.

- **Do not put location tags on that could put you or your property at risk.** Allowing people to know your home is in Brighton, but you are in Spain is an invitation

- Anyone can write an app – in fact many of the components you need are freely available on the internet. A lot of programming that was once the domain of professional programmers is now being done by children.