



Children on Social Media

Guidance for Agents, Parents and Professionals working with children and young performers

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, offering both opportunities and risks, particularly for children and young performers. This document aims to provide clear guidance for parents, agents, and professionals to navigate social media responsibly while prioritising child safety and well-being.

Aims of this Guidance

- To help parents and professionals understand the impact and potential dangers of social media on children and young performers.
- To establish best practice guidelines for the use of social media for Young Performers by parents, agents, and professionals in the entertainment industry.
- To improve safeguarding measures and mitigate risks associated with children's online presence.

Why This Guidance Is Important

The Rise of Social Media Accounts for Young Performers

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for parents to create social media accounts for their children in an effort to boost their visibility as aspiring actors, performers, or models. Some of these accounts are established when children are as young as four or five, often managed by parents.

While well-intentioned, this practice carries significant risks. Many parents believe that an online presence increases their child's chances of being noticed by industry professionals. However, casting decisions are not influenced by a child's social media following, making this belief a myth. The potential dangers can outweigh any perceived benefits.

Risks of Oversharing

Personal branding is important in the entertainment industry, but oversharing can lead to unintended consequences, including:

- **Compromised Safety** – Predators, stalkers, and scammers exploit shared information to gain access to children.
- **Exploitation** – Young performers are frequently targeted by fraudulent talent agencies or fake audition scams.
- **Emotional Toll** – Constant exposure to social media scrutiny can negatively affect a child's mental health and self-esteem.

Concerns About Sharing Personal Information

Geographical Exposure

A child's social media presence can inadvertently reveal sensitive details about their location, such as:

- Where they train in dance, drama, singing, or sports.
- The school they attend.
- Dance festivals, workshops, or competitions they participate in.

Such information makes it easier for strangers to locate and approach children, a risk that should not be taken lightly. Parents would never disclose such details to a stranger in person, and the same caution should apply online.

Tracing Private Information

- Some individuals can track home addresses by connecting parents' details with business registries like Companies House.
- There have been reported cases of fan mail being sent directly to a child's home, exposing them to unwanted contact.
- Sharing a child's **Spotlight profile link** makes otherwise private industry information publicly accessible, compromising security.

The Emotional and Mental Health Impact

Social media can be a double-edged sword. While it offers visibility, it also exposes young performers to:

- **Harsh Criticism & Online Trolling** – Negative comments can severely impact a child's self-esteem.
- **Unrealistic Comparisons** – Seeing peers land prestigious roles may foster self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy.

- **Pressure to Maintain an Online Persona** – The need to constantly present a “perfect” image can create stress and anxiety.

Young performers should be encouraged to focus on their craft rather than seeking validation through online engagement.

Long-Term Consequences for a Performer’s Career

Permanence of Digital Footprints

Anything posted online has the potential to resurface years later. A seemingly innocent post made in childhood could impact a performer’s reputation or career opportunities in the future.

Industry Visibility & Unwanted Attention

For young actors cast in high-profile productions, online information can be accessed and spread on a massive scale:

- Fans of major franchises actively seek out personal details and behind-the-scenes content.
- The sudden rise to fame can lead to an overwhelming loss of privacy if a child’s social media history is publicly available.
- Posts shared in earlier years may be scrutinised by the media or casting professionals later in their career.

Best Practices for Agents

As agents, we recognise the promotional benefits of social media for agencies and clients. However, safeguarding children must remain the priority. When posting about young performers, agents should:

- Use only the child’s first name.
- Avoid tagging the child’s social media account, even if managed by a parent.
- Refrain from mentioning locations, schools, or training institutions.
- Not share Spotlight links.
- Ensure compliance with production companies’ guidance on social media use for child actors.

If a high-profile project necessitates a social media presence, the account should be closely monitored, and all decisions should be made in consultation with the child’s parents.

Best Practices for Parents

Understanding Age Restrictions

Social media platforms in the UK require users to be at least **13 years old** to join, aligning with data protection laws.

If You Choose to Have Your Child on Social Media:

- Keep the account **private**, allowing only verified followers.
- Post only images or videos already in the public domain (e.g., production stills, commercials, or official trailers).
- Avoid sharing pictures of your child in dancewear, swimwear, or other revealing attire.
- Accept **followers only from known individuals** or those who can be verified.
- Restrict direct messaging to known contacts.
- Do not include identifying details in bios (e.g., school, training locations).
- Not share Spotlight links.
- Prevent the account from being **tagged in posts** to reduce visibility.
- Avoid using the child's **full name** to minimise searchability.

Parents should **never** feel pressured to create a social media presence for their child for marketing purposes. The child's safety, privacy, and well-being must always take precedence.

Best Practices for Other Professionals Working with Children

This guidance extends to professionals such as:

- Photographers
- Casting directors
- Producers
- Dance and theatre schools
- Acting coaches

Recommendations:

- Follow the same guidelines set for agents.
- Always **obtain consent from both the agent and parent** before sharing any images or details about a child.

- Avoid geotagging or including specific locations.
- Be aware of your **Duty of Care** and maintain ethical standards when working with young performers.

Conclusion

This document is **not** intended to instil fear but to raise awareness of potential risks and encourage responsible social media use. While social media can be a valuable tool, it is crucial to remain vigilant, informed, and proactive in protecting children in the digital space. By following these guidelines, parents, agents, and industry professionals can create a safer online environment for young performers while supporting their careers responsibly.