



University of
Southampton

HARMFUL SHARENTING IN THE UK

**Briefing for Parents,
Relatives, and Guardians**

Sharenting is the practice of parents sharing images, stories, and other information about children, on social media. Schools, relatives, and guardians are also involved in the practice.

The ProTechThem research project brought together social and computer science expertise to investigate the risks of sharenting and identify harm prevention measures.

The project surveyed a representative sample of over 1,000 UK parents and found that current regulations, platform safety provisions, and parental cybersecurity measures do not sufficiently protect affected children from digital harm.



45%

Prevalence:

45% of UK parents practice sharenting



Commonly used platforms:

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube



Harm rates:

1 in 6 parents said that their children had experienced digital harm due to sharenting



Risky practices related to parental reports of digital harm are:

Weak cybersecurity measures devised by parents and frequent sharing.



False sense of security:

Parents overestimated the effectiveness of security settings provided by social media platforms



School risk:

Parents felt that schools were often less careful when sharing information (such as images and stories) of their children online.



Poor cybersecurity awareness:

Parents exhibited insufficient awareness of how social media properties such as the 'share' and 'tag' features enable unauthorised and rapid reshares of their posts about their children by relatives and others within and outside their private networks of social media 'friends'

Digital harms affecting children



Identity Fraud



Identity Theft



Harassment



Cyberbullying



Contact by Strangers



Privacy Breaches

Recommendations

for Parents, Guardians, Relatives, and others practicing sharenting

The following resources can be used to improve online child safety. They are freely available and are based on the project's findings:

- **The Sharenting Risk Awareness Checklist**
www.protechthem.org/sharenting-risk-awareness-checklist-srac-coming-soon
- **The Sharenting Cyber Awareness Video**
www.protechthem.org/resources-2
- **An open source user-friendly digital tool for detecting and deleting risky social media content about children**
www.protechthem.org/digital-resources

Resources

This brief draws on interdisciplinary research funded by ESRC [ES/V011278/1] conducted by social and computer science researchers at the University of Southampton and supported at various stages by external governmental and child safety partners: The UK's DCMS, KidScape, and The Age Check Certification Scheme.

If you have found this checklist useful, please drop us a line at: protechthem@outlook.com. We greatly value your feedback.



Find out more

ProTechThem: Building Awareness for Safer and
Technology-Savvy Sharenting
www.protechthem.org



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