



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, TikTok



Harm

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



Risky practices

Weak cybersecurity measures devised by parents and frequent sharing



False sense of security

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



School risk

Parents feel that schools are often less careful when sharing information (such as images and stories) about their children online.



Poor cybersecurity awareness

Parents exhibit insufficient awareness of how social media properties such as the 'share' and 'tag' features enable unauthorised re-shares of the content they create about their children. Relatives and others within and outside their private networks of social media 'friends' or 'followers' can repost such content.

Harms affecting children



Identity Fraud



Identity Theft



Harassment



Cyberbullying



Contact by Strangers



Privacy Breaches

Resources

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

- **[The Sharenting Risk Awareness Checklist](http://www.protechthem.org/digital-resources)**
www.protechthem.org/digital-resources
- **[The Sharenting Cyber Awareness Video](http://www.protechthem.org/digital-resources)**
www.protechthem.org/digital-resources
- **[An early warning AI system for detecting risky social media content about children](http://www.protechthem.org/digital-resources)**
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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