



LEARNING FEATURE – TORS VS VPNS

Many of us use Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to give us extra privacy when browsing online. A VPN is a service that allows users to create a secure and encrypted connection to another network over the internet. By choosing a different location, users can browse online using a different IP address which also has the added benefit of allowing users to browse websites that might be blocked in certain countries.

However, another service used to mask your location online is so-called “Onion Routers” (TORs). As the name would suggest, when using these your data is encrypted in layers. As the data passes through each relay in the Tor network, one layer of encryption is peeled away, but the remaining data stays encrypted. This ensures that no single relay ever knows the complete path of the data, adding a robust layer of security and anonymity to your online activities. This means that Tor networks are popular amongst people accessing the dark web, as it makes more difficult to trace your online activity.

The risks Tor networks pose to young people was thrown into light during the recent murder of Brianna Ghey, where it was discovered that one of her killers used the Tor browser to access violent content on the dark web in the lead up to the murder. Staff should be vigilant to the presence of these apps, as they may be used to hide service users' online activity.

MINICHAT APP

Recently, Park View Primary School in Prestwich has alerted parents to an app, over concerns it could be used by pupils to talk to strangers



Minichat is a free cam chat app that allows users to video chat with people from around the world. Although the app has a minimum age limit of 17, there are concerns that it could be accessed by younger children who would then have the opportunity to talk with unknown adults via video chat. This is particularly concerning for our settings, as our service users are often more vulnerable to online exploitation. Staff should be mindful of this app, particularly in conversations with young people or when conducting phone searches.

ONLINE RISKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS

Social media and online platforms can be a way for people with EDs to seek support from others. However, a recent article from *Psychology Today* has found an increase in pro-ED communities online. These communities encourage, normalise and glamourise ED behaviours while minimising their negative consequences. Pro-ED groups share harmful visual content across social media platforms using hashtags such as *#hinspo*, *#fatspo* and *#bonespo*. The article found that the website *Reddit* was full of adolescents enquiring about where to find pro-ED online communities. Although the groups are largely public, they aren't easy to find which makes it difficult for parents to monitor. Click [here](#) to read more and understand the dangers behind these communities.

COMBATting 'ALPHA MALE' INFLUENCERS

Labour proposes training young male mentors in schools to counter the influence of misogynistic figures like Andrew Tate on social media. These mentors would serve as positive role models and help students develop critical thinking skills to evaluate online content. The plan also involves training teachers on how to address online sexism and sexual harassment in schools.

Dr. Patrick Roach, the general secretary of the NASUWT union, said its research had shown sexual harassment and sexist abuse towards female teachers and pupils in schools and colleges was commonplace, and that the majority of incidents were not reported or dealt with effectively.

Read more about Labour's proposal in [The Guardian's article](#).