

Employment Relations Committee
8 December 2021

TikTok – Advice to Members

TikTok is a video-sharing social media platform that allows users to create, share and discover short (usually 15 second) videos. It's particularly popular for lip-syncing, dancing, comedy, TikTok challenges and micro-blogging.

Risks and Controls

Like all social media platforms, TikTok can be used negatively and can contain inappropriate content. There are steps that can be taken to avoid exposure to negative content:

- **Settings:** When a new account is opened by someone aged 16+ it is set to be public by default. Whilst an account is public TikTok can share any video content that is posted and anyone can view content. Settings can easily be made private so that only approved users can engage with content. Each video posted can have tailored privacy settings to control who can view and who can comment. An account opened by a child aged 13 – 15 will be set to private as default.
- **Parental controls:** The app has an age restriction of 13+. There is a "family safety mode" to allow parents to set limits on their children's use of the app to avoid excessive screentime, restrict direct messages and limit exposure to inappropriate content as far as possible.

Advice to Members – when subjects

There are growing concerns that members are being featured in pupils' videos, either by being recorded in school or by being mentioned/imitated by the pupil. If a member becomes aware that they are the subject of a pupil's video they should inform their line manager immediately. At the very least the pupil should be instructed to remove the video from the app and their device and be informed of the potential repercussions of online bullying (including a report made to the police).

If a member feels that their employer is not taking sufficient steps to prevent them from being targeted by pupils, they should seek advice from their local EIS representative in the first instance.

Members should report concerns regarding online abuse directly to the relevant social media platform. A ban from TikTok or any other social media platform can prevent further incidents.

Advice to Members – when users

Members who wish to use TikTok should be aware of the dangers of the app. As with all social media, once content is posted it isn't always possible to delete every trace of it. The creator of a video can decide the ways in which users can interact with their videos (save, share, comment etc) before posting. However, preventing a user from recording a video using the app does not prevent screen recording with their device. It should also be noted that TikTok and all videos posted publicly can be accessed anonymously without a TikTok account.

Cyber-bullying is prevalent and members who choose to use TikTok should be aware that posting videos may lead to unwanted and/or abusive comments. Any such bullying should be reported directly to the app. It is suggested that commenting is restricted to friends only (there are four privacy settings to choose from: public; followers; friends; private).

Members should give serious consideration to the standards of conduct and professionalism required of them before accessing TikTok and the risk of reputational damage before posting any content. As a reminder, it is not appropriate for members to follow pupils or engage with them on social media.