

#WakeUpWednesday

What Parents and Carers Need to Know about MyLOL

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MYLOL

MyLOL is a free social networking and dating site aimed at teens. Profiles can publicly display users' images and information, including sexual orientation and personal interests. The service bills itself as "the number one teen dating website in the world", claiming to have more than a million users globally. Despite its popularity, the MyLOL app is no longer available from Google Play or the App Store, although the site is still active. In some countries, police forces and schools have previously warned parents about "sinister predators" and "inappropriate activities" on the site.

AGE RESTRICTION 13-19

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

FLIMSY AGE GATES
Although MyLOL states it is exclusively aimed at users aged between 13 and 19, there is no credible age verification system to prevent a younger child – or an older adult – from signing up to the platform. Coupled with the fact that it's impossible to establish a user's true identity on MyLOL, this raises a serious concern that the site could be used for grooming.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT
MyLOL maintains that it monitors all uploaded images for nudity or sexual content. It also claims to be able to detect suspicious keywords. However, there have been numerous reports of explicit content being found on the platform, with users often posting provocative, semi-nude pictures of themselves and engaging in flirty or sexually explicit conversation.

POTENTIAL CYBER-BULLYING
MyLOL lets users 'vote' on other people based solely on their appearance, much in the same vein as the now-defunct site Hot or Not. This feature could easily lead to distress and bullying, especially if a young person's profile pics receive an unwelcome response. Various reviews of MyLOL have noted that bullying frequently becomes an issue in the platform's chat groups and private messages.

IN-APP SPENDING
MyLOL is free to join and use, but it also offers paid-for memberships. Users who have paid money get their profile promoted at the top of the site and in search results. They can also earn additional credits for increased engagement with the platform – such as sharing, replying to messages and voting. At the time of writing, the monthly membership fee was £5.95 (just under £8).

DATA COLLECTION
According to its privacy policy, MyLOL collects user data including email addresses, contact details and interests. While the company says it is committed to protecting users' privacy, the small print states that information may be shared externally. MyLOL claims to follow procedures to keep data secure, but does not specify what these procedures are, or whether such information is encrypted.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS
MyLOL makes it easy to connect with strangers. In fact, the site's rewards feature encourages users to send private messages to people they don't know. There have been several media stories of adults posing as teens on MyLOL to connect with minors, which could lead to extremely dangerous situations, such as a young person meeting up with someone who has been posing under a false identity.

Advice for Parents & Carers

DISCUSS ONLINE DATING
It's vital to talk to your child about the possible dangers of platforms like MyLOL – particularly the threat of online predators. Remind them of the risks of sharing intimate images and information with strangers and emphasise that most people don't realise they're being 'catfished' until it's too late – it really isn't wise for a young person to meet up with someone they've only spoken to online.

EXPLAIN PRIVACY RISKS
Before your child begins using a service such as MyLOL, it's important that they understand the potential pitfalls of giving out their personal data on this type of platform. Explain to them, for example, that they shouldn't divulge any personally identifying information to people who they don't know, as scammers can be quite convincing when attempting to steal someone's identity.

RESTRICT IN-APP SPENDING
If your child has access to a bank card or other payment method, they may be enticed into signing up for MyLOL's premium features. Having their profile boosted and receiving more attention could be especially tempting if their friends also use the site. You could consider altering their device's settings to disable internet purchases, or at the very least keeping an eye on their online spending.

SET UP LOCATION ALERTS
If you're worried that your child may be planning to meet up with someone they've met on MyLOL, you could consider utilising GPS or Wi-Fi location tracking technology to follow their whereabouts in real time. You can even set up a virtual boundary or 'fence' and opt to receive an alert to your phone if your child enters or exits a specified area.

Meet Our Expert
Carly Pagan is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech website The Insider, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, writer and consultant.

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"The #1 teen dating website in the world" ☹️ That's the claim of MyLOL, which offers 13 to 19-year-olds the chance to rate each other's pics, send private messages and contact strangers online. If that sets your alarm bells ringing, you're far from alone: law enforcement agencies and schools in several countries have seen fit to issue warnings about the platform ⚠️

Among the main issues is the fact that MyLOL doesn't have a reliable age verification method – meaning there's no foolproof way to stop anyone outside the platform's intended 13–19 audience signing up for an account under a false age. Our #WakeUpWednesday guide also highlights potential concerns around in-app purchases and the use of geolocation for sinister reasons.

Please [click here](#) to download the guide.