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Dear Parent/Carer

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### **Cleveland Police warning to parents and victims over Snapchat app map**

Police are warning parents and victims about a new snapchat feature, which could be 'live streaming' the activities of children and vulnerable people to complete strangers.

The new interactive map feature not only allows users to access videos but shows their whereabouts to their friends. If there are no privacy settings on the account – complete strangers will see the information and the location of where the post was made.

Officers in the cyber-crime team tested the new map feature over a two day period with a normal user account, which had no friends attached to it. The only videos which were visible were those with poor privacy settings. Videos of young children posted in several locations were seen, including their home address and recreation areas. If the person is logged into Snapchat on the move, the cartoon character which represents them will move, tracking their exact movements by GPS.

Officers warn that this could put people at risk in many different circumstances, including:

- Domestic abuse victims who do have fled their abuser and do not want their location revealing,
- Identifying to a potential burglar when people are in or out of the home address, supported by videos showing valuables in the background,
- Children who are being bullied may be tracked by the bully using the map, which prevents the victim from escaping the abuse.

Inspector Steve Bell said: "The decision to change privacy settings or to turn the map feature off is entirely a choice for parents; however we would strongly advise that at the very least privacy settings are changed. There will be many people who don't know the friends they have on their Snapchat, and using the map feature exposes a great deal of personal information – we simply want to warn people that they should turn the feature off if they aren't happy for strangers to capture their details."

I would urge parents, as a result of the information above, to discuss the Snapchat privacy settings with their sons/daughters and ensure they are appropriate after watching this Cleveland Police video:

<https://youtu.be/GXp4G35Pvas>

Yours faithfully



**Andrew Wappat**

Principal, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 06995649.

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