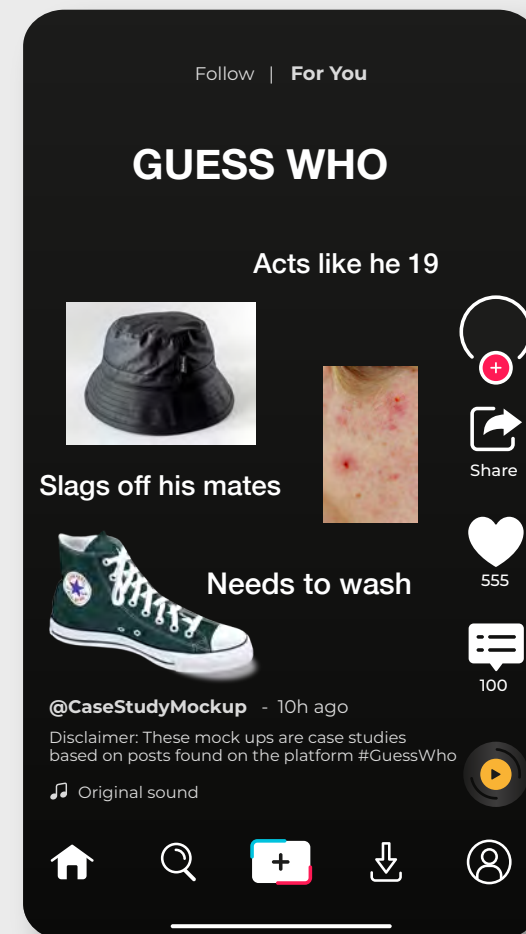# 'Guess Who' TikTok Trend
Online Safety Briefing

27 April 2022

What is the Trend?

In recent weeks, a new 'Guess Who' trend has become popular on TikTok. It was highlighted in news articles in Edinburgh and St Helen's, but school 'Guess Who' TikTok accounts appear to be UK wide. These videos also appear in US schools. We believe this trend presents several risks to children and young people, as well as those in wider school communities such as teachers, parents, and carers. We have provided this in-depth look at the trend to give safeguarding professionals a better understanding of what it is and how they can help those in their network.

The 'Guess Who' trend involves young people creating anonymous profiles on TikTok, often including the name of their school and/ or their year group. It is loosely based on the well-known game 'Guess Who' and features young people posting images as 'clues' to someone's identity, typically through interests or personality traits, such as:

- A picture of braces to indicate the person wears them.
- The logo of their favourite band.
- Phrases used to describe known facts, like "owns a dog", "teacher's pet", or "likes purple".
- Initials, year group, or names of close friends.
- Partial or blurred pictures of the person.

GUESS WHO

Acts like he 19

Slags off his mates

Needs to wash

555

100

@CaseStudyMockup - 10h ago

Disclaimer: These mock ups are case studies based on posts found on the platform #GuessWho

♫ Original sound

Once a 'Guess Who' post has been uploaded, users are invited to participate by guessing who the clues are referring to. They are then encouraged to provide suggestions for future videos.

Previously, there have been similar trends on social media, such as 'Starter Packs' on Instagram, where collages of images relating to a person would be posted to describe them. Many people created a 'Starter Pack' for themselves, celebrities, or their friends.
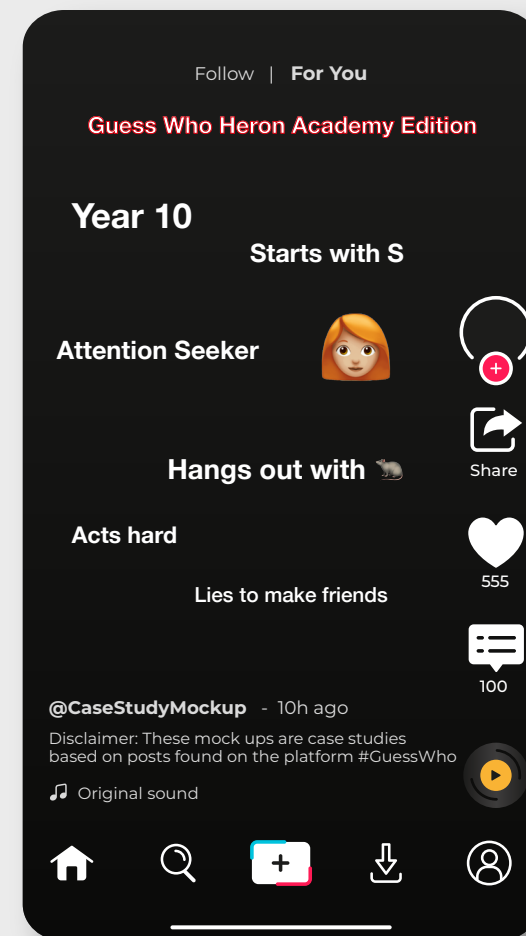
Why is this trend an issue?

We live in the digital world. Young people use technology and digital platforms to participate in all aspects of their life from education to social interaction. While there can be an innocent and fun side to 'Guess Who', it can be (and has been) used to hurt, humiliate, and bully others.

Areas of Concern

Bullying and Harassment

- While some videos range from seemingly harmless and fun with descriptions like "loves yellow", "reads books", and "goes to choir" - others are hurtful and can be serious, like "nobody likes her", "he has no friends", or "tramp".

- As the popularity of the trend increases, information used may escalate into more worrying and damaging content. In some cases, our experts found that clues can include accusations of sexual assault or racist comments.

- This trend can quickly evolve into peer abuse, facilitate the spreading of rumours, or target an individual's insecurities (such as appearance).

- The long-term impact of cyberbullying on a young person's physical and mental wellbeing can be profound. Cyberbullying, as with all bullying, can contribute to mental health disorders, substance misuse, and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation.

Follow | **For You**

Guess Who Heron Academy Edition

Year 10

Starts with S

Attention Seeker 👩

Share

Hangs out with 🐀

Acts hard

555

Lies to make friends

100

@CaseStudyMockup - 10h ago

Disclaimer: These mock ups are case studies based on posts found on the platform #GuessWho

🎵 Original sound

Areas of Concern

Possible Development into Teacher-Targeted Bullying

- Pupils may use this trend as a way of ridiculing or harassing staff based on appearances, personality traits, or other features.

- These posts may be generated as a form of joke or prank.

- If escalated, these posts could have a negative impact on teachers and school staff who are being victimised (which we are already seeing happen).

Accusations and Allegations

- As the trend grows, some young people are using it as a way of raising allegations and accusations against someone else, while referring to key characteristics of the victim.

- These can cause damage to the reputation of another.

- Allegations and accusations can range in severity, with some as serious as sexual assault.

Risks

Persuasive Nature

- The trend is persuasive by nature. It actively encourages participation through guessing, making suggestions for future content, and through tagging friends in videos to spread the joke to others.

- It has the potential to escalate within schools and target many young people in a malicious manner.

Heightened Levels of Anxiety and Stress

- If a young person is aware their school has a 'Guess Who' TikTok, they may begin to feel anxious and stressed if they fear they might be next to be targeted.

- With people suggesting who should be posted next, it creates an atmosphere of living on the edge for young people, especially if they are worried they will be the next target by doing anything wrong or looking different.

Risks

Malicious Rumours

- This trend can facilitate the spreading of malicious and false rumours within school communities that can be very harmful to the victim, in some cases even resulting in serious outside action being taken.

- Young people may use the seemingly anonymous nature of these accounts and videos to make up rumours about each other. If a young person doesn't like or has an issue with a peer, they may suggest or make up and spread rumours about that person so they will be victimised by the trend.

- Regardless of whether they are true or not, rumours will **always** have negative consequences for the victim.
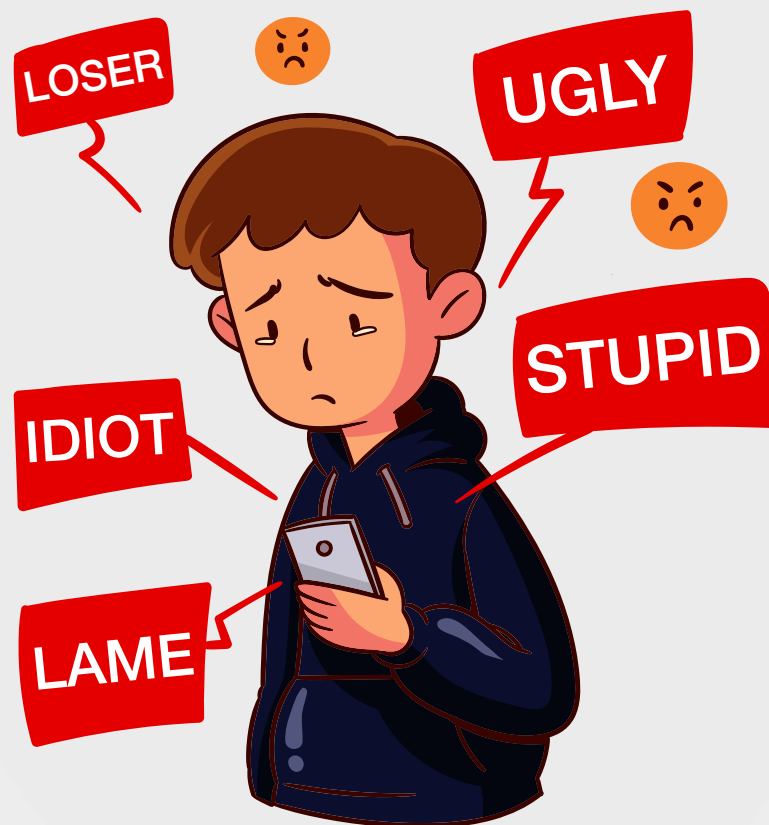
Risks

LGBTQ+ Abuse

- Several existing TikToks in this trend target LGBTQ+ youth, using bullying tactics and derogatory phrases (e.g. calling a young person 'gay' as a form of homophobic bullying).

- This can have long-term damaging effects to young people.

- This also applies when clues like "is gay" or "has a secret boyfriend" are used to 'out' the young person without their consent.

- The act of 'outing' someone who does not wish their sexuality or gender identity to be known can be extremely upsetting to the victim and could have harmful consequences.

Risks

Friendship and Relationship Abuse

- This trend could be used to target an individual with negative comments after a friendship or relationship ends.

- These comments can have a negative impact on friendships and relationships and can 'slut shame' (*stigmatising someone based on their sexuality or relationship habits*) individuals.

Consequences for the Pupils

- Most schools have a policy around online safety and proper internet use that can involve harmful trends and cyberbullying. This directly impacts pupils who may be found to be engaging in this behaviour. They could face consequences such as detention, suspension, or expulsion.

- Depending on the popularity of this trend, it could affect entire year groups and teaching staff.

Our safety experts identified videos with clues such as:

- Cheated on her boyfriend twice

- Fake friend

- Dated five boys on the rugby team

Advice/Tips for Parents and Carers

Talking to Children about Harmful Nature of the Trend

- It's important to talk with your child about being responsible for their online actions and how they might impact other people. Make sure you teach them about responsible internet and device usage.

- Discussing harmful content with young people can help them to recognise the different types they may come across online (e.g. name calling, posting someone's secrets or personal information, spreading rumours).

- Try to have this conversation in a comfortable, relaxed environment (e.g. on the drive home from school, at the dinner table, etc) that will allow space for questions.

- Children of all ages should be aware of the hurtful, damaging impact this trend can have on children being targeted. Laughing at, talking about, sharing, or even tagging friends in the trend posts online can be very hurtful to victims and could come across as a form of bullying.

- Advise those in your care to contact a trusted adult if they come across this trend (or others like it). Even if they are not the target, it's important to share this is happening in their community with someone they trust who can offer help.

- Signposting children to the different places they can go for help if this trend (or any cyberbullying) happens to them or their friends.

- Children and young people in your care may not use the word bullying to describe what is happening to them, so it's important to listen if they mention things which are upsetting them or worrying them online.

Advice/Tips for Parents and Carers

Focus on Digital Resilience

- If you see something say something! Empowering those in your care to be proactive when encountering online harmful content will help make them (and those around them) safer on apps and other platforms.

- If a young person receives or accidentally stumbles across the trend online and they are concerned about the content, they should be encouraged to talk to someone they trust, especially if they are upset or uncomfortable. It might help to explain that they will not be in trouble, but an adult can help make sure they are safe and that they seek further help if needed.

- If a child needs to speak to someone online, remind them that they can always reach out to Childline for confidential help and support.

Blocking and Reporting

- Children and young people should be encouraged to block and report all users who share harmful content, whether or not it's directed at them.

- You can explore how to block and report together through our Online Safety Centre.   **How to Block**   **How to Report**

- Remind the young person that even if nothing happens immediately, reporting harmful content on TikTok will help its developers find and identify harmful trends faster.

Advice for Safeguarding Professionals (and School Staff)

Educate Your Network

- In order to educate others to this trend and manage the impact it could have within your school community, share this brief with members of staff. It may be helpful to signpost them to other resources on similar trends or reporting procedures.

- This trend is not the first of its nature and will not be the last. By creating a response plan that involves members of your school community, there will be more confidence and less panic if this trend makes its way to your institution.

- Get on the platforms young people are using to better understand the medium and world they are engaging with. However, no staff member should ever be interacting with students or parents/carers on a social media platform.

Discuss Online Harms within Classrooms

- Even if this trend has not reached your school, it is worth having a conversation about them with the students in your institution.

- Rather than naming the trend or highlighting a specific one, sticking to general language will educate them on past trends and focus on the behaviour around them.

Advice for Safeguarding Professionals (and School Staff)

Discuss Online Harms within Classrooms

- Remind them of the impact bullying can have on an individual student. Ask them to consider how they would feel if they were the victim of someone else's 'joke' and if they would find it as funny then, especially if it involves rumours or personal information that they do not want shared with their wider community.

- Use our Safer Schools app and resources to further instruct and educate students in your school.

Respond to Harmful Trends Appropriately

- If the 'Guess Who' trend (or a similar trend) does happen within your school, it's important to discuss this head-on with teachers, staff, and students. Emphasising the harmful nature of this trend may help the students understand how serious it is.

- Any rumours of a serious nature that appear within the trend should be treated as rumours rather than fact. Discreetly identifying the student it may be about and calling them in for a private conversation might help them deal with the fallout, especially if they are struggling.

- Where appropriate, involve other authorities and help services if needed.

Ineqe Safeguarding Group

+44 (0) 2890 232 060

enquiries@ineqe.com

www.ineqe.com

@ineqegroup

Safer Schools

+44 (0) 28 9600 5777

saferschools@ineqe.com

www.oursaferschools.co.uk

@OurSaferSchools