



NCP Conference



Supporting Parents
Make Better Decisions
If Sharing Online About Their Children:
“Respectful Sharenting”

Debbie Greaves
Senior Social Work Practitioner
WHST



What is ‘Sharenting’?

- When parents (or others e.g. grandparents) ‘share’ about their ‘parenting’ (‘Sharenting’) online on Social Media, Blogging, Vlogging, Live Streaming, within groups, chat rooms on both closed or public platforms
- Could include narrative/text, ‘posts’, comments, stories, moving or still images.



Interest in researching this topic

- As a mother of two Minecraft-Mad children and keen tech user- personal interest
- As a trainer in E-Safety- what does the evidence say?
- It's a '**marmite**' issue- some people think it's narcissistic but others find it to be their 'lifeline'
- Lack of information that is evidence-based on this topic. Technology has overtaken our ability to legislate or educate parents for a digital age – future implications?
- It's fascinating!



What did the review focus on and why?

Conducted a systematic literature review focused on:

- Children's privacy rights and
- Parents' freedom of expression rights

What are the evidence-informed recommendations for sharenting?

Aim: to develop a resource for parents to help them make evidence-informed decisions about sharenting



- Today's child will have around 1,000 photos of them uploaded by age 5 (Nominet, 2015)
- 85% are careful about access issues. Only 15% worry what their children will think as adults about this (Ofcom, 2017:35)
- 'Oversharenting' noted as a concern- children's identities or location easily found
- Security settings not checked regularly



Modern Family Album...



- 'Embarrassing Polaroids and stories were small-scale mortifications at worst' (Wayne, 2016)
- Can record from pre-birth to post-death
- 'Today's parenting is becoming a digitally shared experience' (Brosch, 2016:233)
- Search engines can 'index and cache the information, providing an opportunity for infinite rediscovery' (Steinberg, 2017:844)
- Reach in the digital age is unprecedented and incomprehensible



Why do people Sharent?

- Connecting – it's convenient
- Self-expression
- Advice giving/receiving
- Sharing all sorts of experiences
- Raising awareness or funds
- Finding like minded others within virtual communities, groups



Summary: Positives/Benefits

- Modern photo album (pre-birth!)
- No end to storage space
- Keeps friends and family updated
- Connects people online
- Can help others in similar situations (e.g. child illness, specific parenting issues) reduce isolation
- Time/space no issue

Summary: Negatives

- Not always respectful of children's privacy or dignity
- Shared with unintended audiences (even 'friends only' sharenting problematic)
- Could 'objectify' children
- Creates digital footprint that can have future implications
- Data mining by others including companies
- SM is only free in 'monetary' terms- you pay with your "data"
- Vicarious discipline or 'Pack parenting' (Greaves, 2017)

I was so embarrassed I cried: do parents share too much online?

From first smiles to teenage experiments, a generation of children has had their every move posted by their parents. What can they do about it?



Themes were noted:

- Gender
- Advice seeking and giving
- Convenience, to Connect, Compare or Compete on "Fakebook?"

Rethinking concepts of:

- 'Trust'
- 'Culture'
- 'Community'
- 'Family' and whose 'right' to family life?
- Objectification of children, monetisation of childhood and calculability of worth
- Permanency of parental expression and digital footprints
- Power dynamics and the framing of narrative and image rights
- A child's right to privacy and safety

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Theme- Gender

- Women share more.
- Dedicated 'father-centred' spaces (such as feeding rooms for mothers) are similarly lacking online.
- SM use both an alleviator and exacerbator of parenting stress.
- Validation important for mothers more than fathers.
- Concerns re: 'Mompertitions' and "Fakebook"



Theme- Advice Seeking/Giving

- 74% of parents offer help through SM
- Time/Space no issue - immediate support
- Being understood
- Getting and giving help e.g. parenting pre-term infant
- Rebalances 'expert' and 'peer' advice but danger of 'echo chambers'

Concerns- quality of advice offered- can be discredited, decontextualized and could result in harm



Theme- Rethinking “Community”

- Raising awareness, fundraising, advocating, challenging stereotypes and learning through SM-based programmes
- Can replace support when parents of sick children have to travel great distances (akin to ‘cheerleading’)
- For some, accessing help from peers is preferable to traditional ‘groups’ (e.g. parenting groups)
- Tensions when younger generation are online and parents are illiterate



Theme: Whose ‘Right’ to Family Life?

- Concept of ‘family’ is weakening with an ‘increased deference for friends as family and family as friends’ (Chambers, 2006:45)
- Privacy for child to enjoy ‘private’ life?
- 11% of parents ask others to removed photos of their children. 62% untag *themselves* from other peoples’ photographs/videos (Ofcom, 2017:32)

“Is this a photo for you, Daddy, or is it a photo for the blog?”

Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017:117)



[Click here to watch video](#)



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If you are giving advice...

- Non-adversarial approach (“I’m right, you’re wrong” **doesn’t** work!)
- Remember- wide definition of parental discretion
- Positive approach- what are the benefits not focused on over-inflated risks or ‘scaremongering’
- Move from focusing on ‘rights’ to universal values e.g. ‘respect’ and ‘consent’
- What is your agency/workplace’s online presence to signpost parents, counter inaccurate information giving?

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Recommendations

Do consciously choose who, what and how you share and think about future implications. Do you want their future employer, partner or school mates to see *that* photo?

Do consider whether you would like that information, photo or video to be shared about you? If the roles were reversed, would that be ok?

Do encourage a culture of mutual respect- 'netiquette' and consent about online behaviours and sharing. Ask permission 😊

Do discuss and agree online family privacy rules the same way we negotiate 'offline' privacy rules.

Do remember children learn from you about what's okay to share online. If they see that 'anything' is okay to share, that doesn't help with their own boundaries about sharing



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Recommendations

Don't share anything that could place children at risk (e.g. their location, school uniform, date of birth, etc.). This information is easily collected by data harvesters and others

Don't share anything embarrassing or private (sitting on the potty, naked/semi-naked, any state of distress e.g. tantrums, upset, afraid) or anything breaching parent/child trust.

Don't 'Pack Parent' or vicariously discipline children by shaming on SM and asking friends to comment e.g. messy room.



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To share or not to share?

‘With each parental disclosure, a bit of the child’s life story is no longer left for the child to tell under her own terms.

Equally important to the right of the child to one day narrate her own story, is the child’s right to choose never to share the information at all’

(Steinberg, 2017:877).



Thank you!

debbie.greaves@westerntrust.hscni.net

Senior Social Work Practitioner

To download the Respectful Sharenting
Booklet:

<http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/SHARENTING%20BOOKLET.pdf>



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