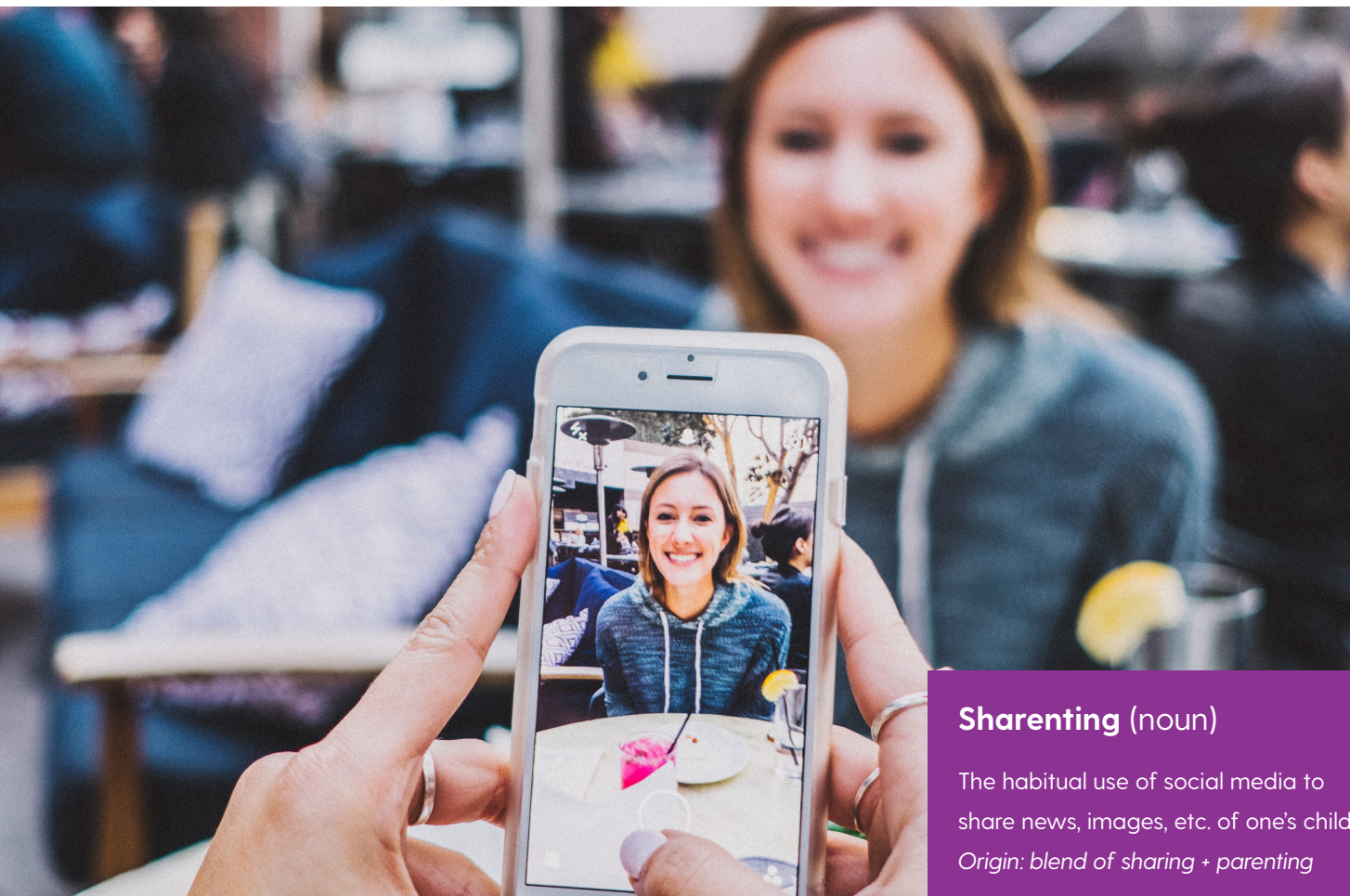




Fact Sheet

Manage Your Sharenting

Commissioner for
Children & Young People
March 2020



Sharenting (noun)

The habitual use of social media to share news, images, etc. of one's children

Origin: blend of sharing + parenting

[collinsdictionary.com](https://www.collinsdictionary.com)

A new baby. A toddler taking their first steps. A child's first day at school. A teenager getting their driver's licence or securing their first job. All amazing milestones in a young person's life worthy of much celebration!

Often, proud parents will try to capture these precious moments on video or in photographs. Some will even choose to keep their friends and family in the loop by sharing the exciting news over social media.

But research shows that children and young people do not always enjoy being featured in their parents' social media 'status updates'.

Not another post about me...

More than a quarter of 10, 11 and 12-year-olds who took part in a 2017 survey said they felt 'embarrassed, anxious or worried' when their parents posted pictures of them online.

Equally, two in five felt 'sad, anxious or nervous' when this happened, and nearly a quarter felt unhappy when friends, siblings or other relatives shared something about them without asking their permission first.

Not asking another person's permission before posting something about them online, breaches common social media etiquette.



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I meant no harm!

Posting pictures of your children and young people online without their permission may also have psychosocial impacts on them, particularly if parents overshare the posts in ways that undermine the image or persona that the young person is trying to create. Similarly if they share something that the young person would prefer to keep private, this could cause them significant social discomfort, leading to long term mistrust.

Ignoring the “unspoken rules” of social media that young people themselves must follow, can put them at risk of cyberbullying or isolation from their peer group. And even seemingly harmless posts can cause significant distress, resulting in young people feeling frustrated or betrayed by their parents.

Experts further worry that sharenting may trigger self-esteem issues if a young person measures their self-worth by how many ‘likes’ or positive comments a post about them receives. Or that they are placing themselves under extreme pressure to always be “on show” for the camera so their parents can post a “perfect” image.

These wellbeing issues sit alongside the cybersafety issues and concerns about identity theft or future impacts on job prospects that are more commonly associated with the sharenting debate.

‘You might have found that funny, but I didn’t. Not cool! Don’t post that kind of stuff.’

‘If I miss out on that job because of your post, I’ll never forgive you!’

‘I can’t believe you put that on Facebook! What will everyone at school say?’

‘I look really terrible in that photo!’



[Sharing + Parenting] = Sharenting



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So, is it all bad?

Posting on social media is a great way for people to keep in touch. It's a quick and easy way for parents to seek external support or validation about any parenting concerns they may have and a practical way to document a child's growth and development using digital technology – something that many schools and childcare centres are also beginning to do.

One survey found that 84 per cent of Australian mothers with children under the age of two had posted images of their children online, while 41 per cent had uploaded pictures of their newborn.

International research suggests that on average a child's image appears in about 195 shared photographs each year, which equates to a portfolio of approximately 1,000 photographs by their fifth birthday!

Competing Rights

Privacy v freedom of expression

When a parent posts something about their child or children online, their right to share information starts to overlap with the child or young person's right to privacy. Both rights are equally important. But getting the balance right can be tricky! It can also create a lot of tension if that balance cannot be established.

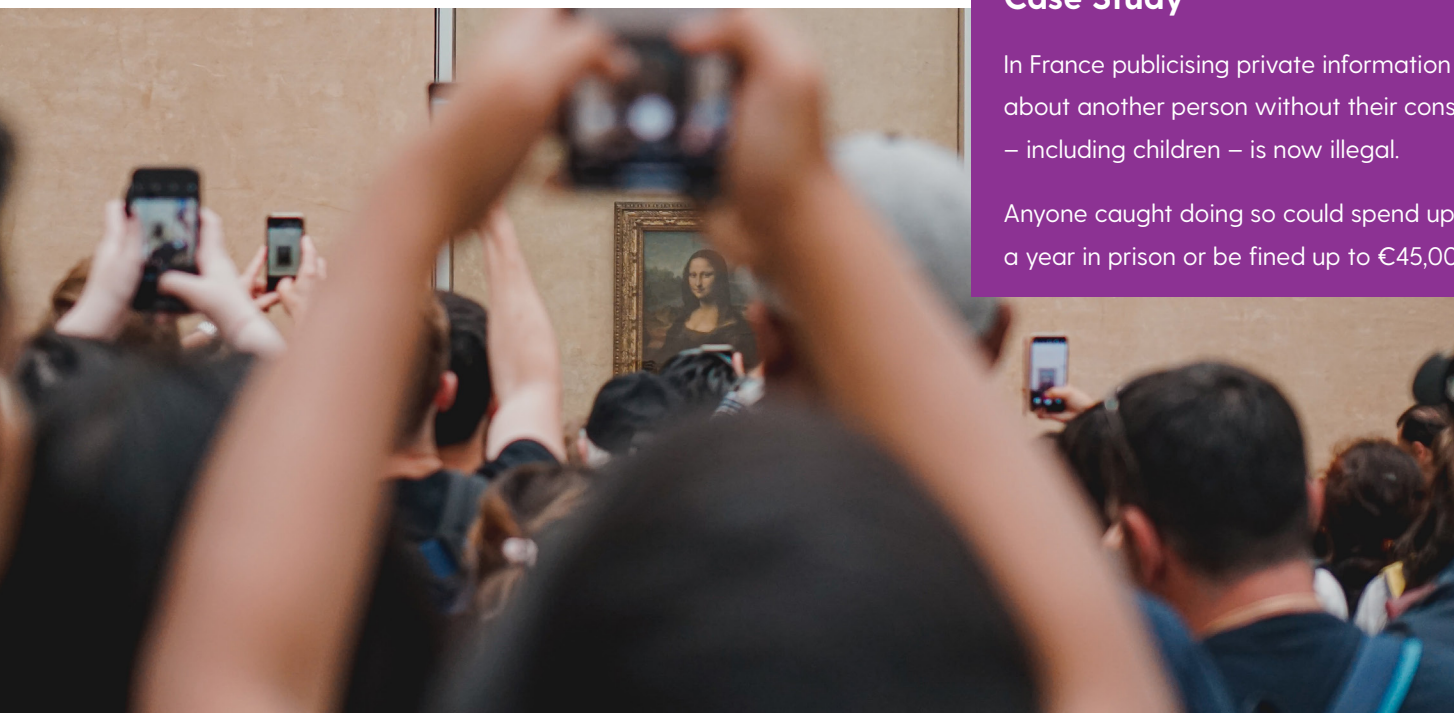
Key points

- Children and young people do not always enjoy being featured in their parents' online status updates.
- To minimise any friction, parents are encouraged to speak with their children openly and frequently, about what they are sharing and about safe online practices.
- They are also advised to stay active with their children on social media but to **model respectful behaviour** when setting (and adhering to!) boundaries about social media usage.

Case Study

In France publicising private information about another person without their consent – including children – is now illegal.

Anyone caught doing so could spend up to a year in prison or be fined up to €45,000!





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Refer to corresponding information on the following page.

Click

to capture the moment

- 1 Consider disabling **location settings** on your camera and deleting the **metadata** before posting images online.

Pause

before you post

- 2 Create clear **personal boundaries** about what you are willing to share and stick to them!
- 3 Consider creating a **personal checklist** to help guide your decisions about what to share online.

Decide

whether to share
or keep private

- 4 Ask your child's **permission** before sharing anything about them and respect their decision, even if you disagree with it.
- 5 Consider restricting who can see your posts or using **private photograph sharing** sites to maintain greater control.
- 6 Consider **sharing anonymously** when discussing your children on open sites.

Enjoy

the memory

- 7 Communicate your **social media preferences** to others with confidence.
- 8 Know and regularly review the **privacy settings** on your social media accounts.
- 9 Consider creating **alerts** to monitor if a child's name is appearing on any websites.
- 10 Know how to **get help** if you think a post is inappropriate or violates the wishes of your child.



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1 Location settings & metadata

When location settings are turned on, exact information about where a photograph was taken is recorded. That information can then be accessed if the metadata is not deleted before an image is posted online.

2 Personal boundaries

Some parents are willing to disclose a lot of information about their children online. Others refuse to share anything at all. Everybody is different, which is why establishing personal boundaries and communicating them to others is so important.

3 Personal checklist

A checklist may help parents validate their decisions about what to post online about their children. A good starting point for a checklist might include some of the following questions being asked prior to posting a picture of your child or young person.

- What is the reason for wanting to post something?
- How will other people (including the featured child) feel now or when they're older if this information is made public?
- Has permission to post the information been sought and granted from the child or young person concerned;
- Have enough precautions been taken to keep the featured child or young person safe?

Are the settings on your phone ensuring that the content is only being shared with friends and family, rather than the general public.

4 Permission & respect

Children mimic the actions of those around them. It can be a really valuable lesson for children and young people to see their parents modelling an active and respectful social media approach and presence.

5 Private photo sharing sites

Once photographs are shared publicly online, controlling who can access those images or how they are used becomes virtually impossible to monitor or control. Private photograph sharing sites, such as Google Photos or Storypark may provide a good alternative for some families.

6 Sharing anonymously

Parents share information online for a variety of reasons. Before sharing anything, it may be useful to consider whether sensitive information is better shared anonymously to help protect the child's privacy.

7 Social media preferences

Sometimes people other than parents share images or information about children online. This can become quite awkward, particularly if the parties have different beliefs about what is appropriate to share. Being upfront

about personal boundaries and having some strategies in place for managing unauthorised posts makes it easier to address situations like this when they occur. For example, always checking with other parents before posting anything about their children may help.

8 Privacy settings

Social media sites are continually evolving. Experts recommend that all users review the privacy settings on their accounts regularly and update their preferences whenever required.

9 Alerts

Parents can sometimes feel anxious about the type of information that is out there about their children. Creating an alert that sends a notification whenever their child's name is mentioned on the web, may provide some peace of mind.

10 Help

Help can be difficult to obtain. Social media sites will typically only remove images that violate their terms of service. The police can only get involved if an offence occurs. And the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner can only act on cyberbullying complaints in certain situations. The best approach is to establish clear personal boundaries and communicate them firmly to other people from the outset.