

Everything You Need to Know about...

'Finstas'

While we are seeing social media platforms introduce features that focus on curating content for your 'close friend' groups, another trend is seeing a resurgence in popularity with children and young people in the UK.

A 'finsta' (a slang term that combines 'fake' and 'Insta', a popular shortened title for 'Instagram') may be the new choice of account for younger generations.

What is a Finsta?

Surely a finsta is a fake Instagram account? Not exactly. A finsta is not the same thing as a fake account (which often engages in scam-like behaviour). Instead, a 'finsta' refers to a secondary account where a user's identity and profile are typically hidden, with access only available to a chosen group of friends or followers.

It can be on any platform, including TikTok and Facebook, but Instagram seems to be the most popular choice. These accounts often use pseudonyms to avoid using real names.

Why would a young person create a finsta?



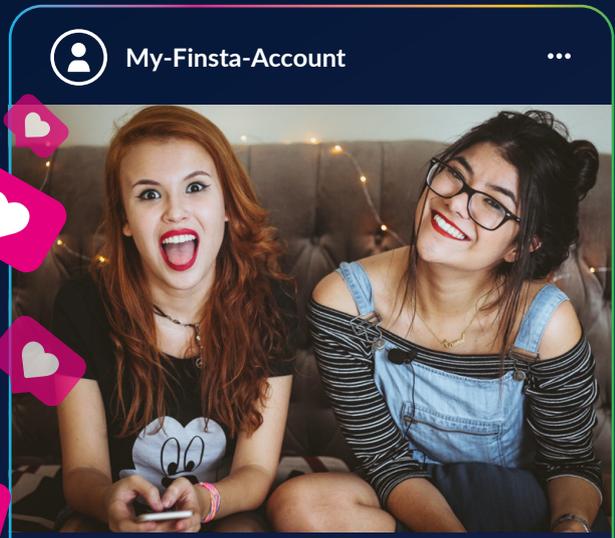
Authenticity
allows them to be 'real' with their close friends.

Connection
with the social media content they want to see.

Anonymity
means not worrying about their public image.

Freedom
to post without anxiety over reception or 'like count'.

Privacy
to explore 'niche' interests separately from 'real' account.



32 likes

According to the 2020/21 #Ofcom report, two-thirds of 8-11-year-olds in the UK had multiple accounts or profiles, with almost half of them running an account just for their family to see.

Top Tips for Parents and Carers

Remind the young person in your care that nothing they post online is truly private and to think before posting. There are multiple ways their posts could be misconstrued or misused by others.

Go through the process of protecting the images they post. Discussing things like copyright and reporting will help empower the young person in your care to make smart choices and to know there is help available if they need it.

Reinforce the importance of protecting personal information. Remind your young person not to share any personal details with anyone they do not know in real life, even if they feel comfortable.

Have an open, non-judgemental conversation about finstas (and other secondary accounts). If they have one, ask about the type of content they are posting and what they feel is the benefit of having different accounts.

Support their decision to have private accounts, but ask if you can check in with them around the material they are posting and the people they are interacting with. Remember - boundaries are important to create an environment of trust and comfort.

Risks

- Unexpected behaviour** - Anonymity might encourage young people to engage in unlikely behaviour, such as posting sexually explicit content, pursuing dangerous political ideals, or bullying.
- Missed help** - Worrisome posts hidden from public view may not be addressed by the appropriate help, especially if it involves self-harm or other destructive behaviours.
- Unwanted exposure** - Others with access to the account may take screenshots of posts and send them to others, or reveal the identity of the account owner.
- Harmful opinions** - Extremist behaviour or insensitive language in 'opinion pieces' may expose young people to others with harmful intentions and could implicate them in illegal activity.
- Social interaction** - A young person may be approached by other users with malicious intentions. This could leave them vulnerable to sexual manipulation, grooming, bullying, and exploitation.

