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## **Parents admit to snooping on social network kids**

*Over 750,000 children violate social networking rules*

The social networking phenomenon sweeping Britain is attracting children as young as eight, forcing parents to spy on their offspring in the process.

A new study by online identity experts Garlik reveals that over 750,000<sup>1</sup> children between the ages of 8 and 12 claim to use the big three social networking sites – Facebook, Myspace and Bebo. This is despite the fact that the minimum age for registration is 13 (14 for Myspace).

The research also indicates that parents are taking matters into their own hands to protect their children with three quarters (72 per cent) snooping on their kids' online. One in four of these parents secretly log into their child's social networking page (25 per cent) whilst a quarter have set up their own social networking page to spy on their kids (26 per cent).

Tom Ilube, Garlik CEO comments: "That parents feel compelled to monitor their children on this scale should send a powerful message to the big social networking sites. With three quarters of a million underage users in the UK, Facebook, MySpace and Bebo need to take their own age restriction policies far more seriously to help allay parents' real fears".

Intense parental monitoring should come as little surprise given that British kids spend an average of an hour a day social networking, with children openly admitting to reckless behaviour online. Over a quarter (26 per cent) of 8 – 15 year olds admit they have strangers as friends on their social networking page, and a fifth (20 per cent) have met up with strangers they've only ever

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<sup>1</sup> 3,427,716 8-12 year olds in the UK according to the 2001 census – 23 per cent have Bebo, Myspace or Facebook accounts – 788,375

encountered online. Two-thirds (66 per cent) also admit posting personal information on their pages including where they go to school and their mobile telephone number.

Ilube continues: "Children are at the vanguard of the social networking phenomenon, using sites such as Facebook and Bebo in the same way other generations used the telephone. With the summer holidays upon us and kids spending hours on the internet, busy parents can't be expected to monitor their children's activities all the time. The recent proposals by the culture select committee could go a long way to safeguarding children online, but in the meantime what are Facebook, Bebo, Myspace and the others doing to help?"

As the social networking phenomenon grows, so too does parental vigilance, with more than half of parents (58 per cent) saying they are more diligent now than a year ago when it comes to monitoring their children's use of social networking sites. Furthermore, nearly all parents (89 per cent) have spoken to their children about the dangers posed by social networking sites.

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**Notes to editor**

Garlik commissioned online teenage community Dubit to conduct research among 1000 children aged 8-15 year olds in June 2008. In addition, market researchers PCP conducted research among a sample of 1030 UK parents.

**About Garlik**

Garlik, the online identity expert, was founded by Mike Harris, founding CEO of Egg plc, former Egg CIO Tom Ilube and former British Computer Society president Professor Nigel Shadbolt. As the first company to develop a web-scale commercial application of semantic technology, Garlik enables consumers to find and understand what personal information is in the public domain about them and manage how their identities appear online.

Garlik has appointed a panel of world-class ID protection and technology experts to advise the business including Professor Wendy Hall CBE from the University of Southampton, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Web, Simon Davies, director of Privacy International and Daniel Cooper, renowned privacy lawyer with Covington & Burling. In January 2008, Garlik was selected as a World Economic Forum, Davos, Technology Pioneer.

Garlik is backed by three of the UK's leading blue chip investment firms, 3i, Doughty Hanson and Noble Venture Finance.