

## Safeguarding Briefing for Parents/Carers 26/04/17

### SimSimi

#### **What is it?**

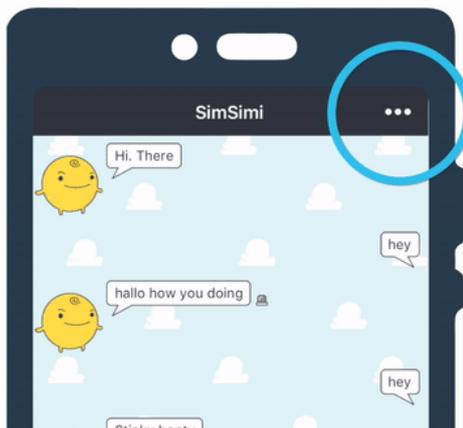
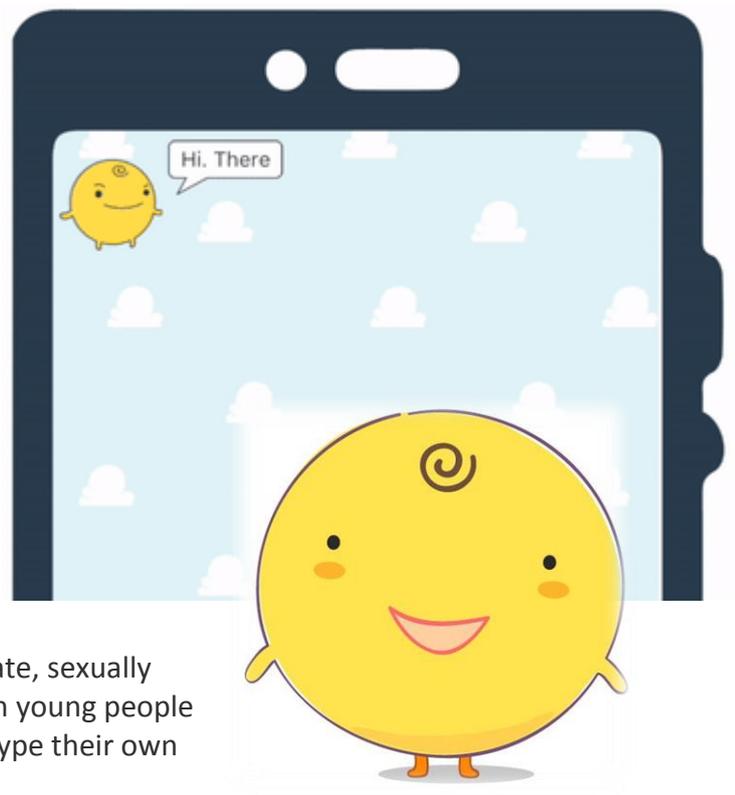
At the most basic level, SimSimi is a chat app. When a user types a message a chatbot (short for chat robot - a computer programme that simulates human conversation) replies.

**How does it work?** This technology is not unique to SimSimi. It is in used in other areas and lots of companies use chatbots for their FAQs and online help.

SimSimi has a 'Words Management' feature which allows users to teach the chatbot certain words and terms which in turn, it can use to reply to particular questions.

Users can therefore "teach" SimSimi inappropriate, sexually explicit and offensive language. This can result in young people who use it receiving abusive replies when they type their own name into the app.

Whilst in a number of cases the response may be targeted at a specific young person, in reality, the same response can appear for anyone with the same or similar name. Children who ask SimSimi questions about themselves might therefore feel hurt and many people mischievously teach SimSimi to respond inappropriately to innocent questions.



#### **What safety tools does it have?**

The app has a limited number of tools to help make the environment safer for users.

**Bad Words:** there is an option to turn off bad words so they don't appear in the app. This is a good idea but as with most things it is not 100% accurate.



Click the small  
computer icon

**Reporting:** Responses can be marked as being 'not interesting', 'sexually explicit', 'vulgar or violent' or 'other'.

It is not clear as to what happens once content is reported. There is currently very little information available on the website about its terms of use or how it deals with flagged content.

The app does state: 'Harass, abuse, defame or otherwise infringe on any other party, you may be subject to civil or criminal penalties.' It is not clear how this is moderated.



### **Advertising (it's all about the Money!)**

In common with most apps, SimSimi draws its initial revenue from Click-through advertising. Adverts pop-up with irritating regularity & unsurprisingly users have the in-app purchase option to remove ads. Users also have the ability by purchasing points to link comments to content.

### **What else?**

#### **Device Settings**

You can prevent a child or young person from access the app on their device if you preset age restrictions and limit in-app purchases.

**SimSimi App Store Age Rating: 17+**

**SimSimi Google Play Store: PEGI 16**

**iOS Age Restrictions** can be set-up on an iPhone or iPad to prevent downloading apps of a certain age rating from the App Store.

**Android Age Restrictions** can be set to restrict the apps your child downloads from the Google Playstore.

**In-App purchases** can be turned off on an iPhone or iPad.



## **Youth violence and vulnerability: street gangs**

### **GANGS**

Whilst the vast majority of young people are well behaved, some are involved in street gangs and intent on causing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and committing crime, including violence towards other gangs.

There are lots of reasons why young people feel the pressure to join gangs. They might be bored and looking for excitement or feel attracted to the status and power it can give them. They might join due to peer pressure, money or family problems.

Gang membership can also make a child, teenager or young adult feel protected and they belong. Spotting something is wrong as early as possible means we can all help them get the right help and support.

### Signs to look out for

Sudden changes in behaviour  
Mood swings  
Specific dress style  
Talking differently - new slang or language with aggressive tone  
Unexplained injuries or sums of money/possessions  
Staying out unusually late  
Graffiti-style tags on possessions  
Refusing to seek medical help for injuries and becoming fearful and/or withdrawn and/or prone to unexplained outbursts of anger.

### What can you do?

Talk to your child or teenager about the serious consequences that occur from violent or illegal behaviour.  
Help them understand the dangers of being in a group intent on causing ASB or getting involved in criminal activity.  
Help find constructive alternative ways to use their time  
Help them to cope with peer pressure and deal with conflict without violence  
Be aware of what your child is doing on the internet  
Talk to teachers/other parents.

### Is your child or teenager already involved?

If your child or teenager is already involved they may not want to talk about it, or could feel scared because of peer pressure.  
Try to understand from their point of view why they are involved with that group and ask them what you can do to help.  
Seek help from local community organisations or youth services. They can offer specialist support and programmes to help them leave that group.



NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Young people join gangs for lots of reasons –



Excitement  
Protection  
Fear

But they can quickly get in too deep. They may be pressured – or forced – into having sex with gang members or committing crimes such as stealing and holding weapons or drugs.

### Are you worried about a young person?

#### We can help

Are they spending time with people you're unsure about?

Do they go missing from home or school? Do they have new clothes or other things you think they can't afford?

If it is any of these - or there's just something that doesn't feel right – we can advise on whether it sounds like they're at risk. Together we can work out what to do next.

**0808 800 5000**

[help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

[nspcc.org.uk/gangs](https://nspcc.org.uk/gangs)

## ACTIVITIES

Help young people to join in positive activities where they can have fun, meet new friends and keep away from committing crime or anti-social behaviour. It will also give you peace of mind knowing they are safe.

There are plenty of schemes that young people can get involved with to have fun, learn new skills and develop social and team building skills.

For example;

**Police cadets** – 01785 232221

**Armed Cadet Force** – 01785 257804

**Duke of Edinburgh's Award** – 0121 308 9470

**National Citizen Service** – 0800 197 8010

**The Prince's Trust** – 0800 842 842

(training, support, mentoring)

**Ruff Diamondz/Ruby Girl** – 01782 774632

**Boxing / Football** – contact Northern IOM Gangs Unit on 01785 233281

### REPORT IT

If you want to report someone you believe is involved in crime, please call Police on 101 or speak to your local officers.

Alternatively, you can contact the independent crime – fighting charity Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or through their Anonymous Online Form at [crimestoppers-uk.org](http://crimestoppers-uk.org).

No personal details are taken, information cannot be traced or recorded and you will not go to Court.

## Help and Support Organisations

**NSPCC**

**0800 800 5000**

(Freephone including from mobiles)

[nspcc.org.uk/gangs](http://nspcc.org.uk/gangs)

**Childline**

**0800 1111**

(Freephone including from mobiles)

**Anti-Bullying Alliance**

[anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

**Drug and alcohol support**

**01782 441715**

**Lifeline – drug and alcohol**

**misuse support**

(covers Stoke on Trent only)

**01782 283113**



Parents in France are being warned about the Blue Whale Challenge, an online phenomenon that encourages youngsters to undertake dangerous dares and self-harm.



The craze is believed to have led to 130 suicides in six months in Russia, where it originated. In France, several cases of suspicious death have been reported and now education authorities are on high alert.

Like the Ice Bucket Challenge, the Blue Whale Challenge involves encouraging participants, via social networks, to face everyday challenges. The difference is that these are intended to lead the 'players' to death on the 50th day, thereby 'winning' the game.

Challenges at the beginning include drawing a whale on a leaf or getting up at night to listen to sad music. As days pass, participants are invited to cut themselves and finally to jump from the roof of a building or to hang themselves.

The Blue Whale suicide game goes by many names including 'A Silent House,' 'A Sea Of Whales' and 'Wake Me Up At 4:20am.' It takes 50 days to complete and is played primarily via the website VKontakte, which is a popular social network in Russia. It gets its name from a common belief that blue whales voluntarily beach themselves in order to end their own lives.

Ten days ago in Hauts-de-France, two young girls were cared for after telling a school nurse about their involvement in the challenge. One of them had reached level 45, while the other had traces of burning and scarification on her arm. On March 15, a teenager from Reims was found dead at his home as a result of self-strangulation.

Counter-offensive 'games' are now appearing on social networks, such as the Pink Whale Challenge that encourages participants to realize fifty positive challenges, for example watching their favourite movie, making friends or helping somebody.

## Player



And if I wanna get out?

## Administrator



I have all your information, they will come after you.

Regards, Paula

Paula Ripplingham-Smith (Assistant Principal, College Academies Trust)

Resources: #DITTO; Andrew Hall Safeguarding Consultant; PSmith; Google; Staffs police; News