

Inequ online safeguarding have been alerted to the risk of potential grooming and abuse on the Avakin Life platform by members of our network; the following information is provided by them:

Our online safeguarding experts have reviewed and tested the game, and discovered a number of potential risks to young people.

The major risk is that users can easily access children and young people online via private and public chats.

2 million people currently use the platform, with **half a million using it every day.**

Once a user has kitted out their character, they can embark on 'endless adventures' in what the company says is 'a world with no limits'.

Here's what we know...



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What is Avakin Life?

Avakin Life is a virtual 3D gaming world where users create their own character, or Avatar, before choosing their outfits and interacting with users at different in-game locations. The premise of the game is to encourage social interaction.

The game can be downloaded on iOS, Android and Amazon Devices,

- **Apple Age Rating** – 12
- **Google Play Age Rating** – Parental Guidance
- **Amazon Age Rating** – Guidance Suggested

What are the key functions?

- The platform uses real money, real people and real places
- Users visit different venues (shopping mall, theme park and more) which each have a designated public chat, where users can 'whisper' or chat privately in the venue
- Users can buy and gift items to dress themselves or flirt with other users
- They can also 'interact' by high fiving or sending kisses

Key Risks

- Our testing found that users under 13 would see a message saying they were not eligible to play, but they could still enter the game, if they lied about their age to bypass the age verification process
- The platform uses public chat rooms, live events and one to one conversations to facilitate interaction
- The game was initially designed for users aged 17+ but now allows children aged 13+
- Despite a fun design, it isn't suitable for children due to the suggestive nature of chats, actions and 'meet ups'
- There is evidence that the platform has been used to groom young children internationally

So what should you as a parent, teacher or safeguarding professional be aware of?

- Anyone can start a conversation with a user
- Direct messages are called 'whispering' when two users are in the same venue
- Users can communicate privately at any time, if they are friends
- The clothes options for Avatars can create sexualised characters
- There are references to drugs and alcohol
- New users are awarded coins for in-app purchases
- Users can buy each other online 'gifts' such as outfits and even apartments which may facilitate online grooming
- Linking other social media accounts such as Facebook and an email address also earns more coins

Our Advice

- Engage young people in a conversation about keeping safe online and who they would talk to if someone made them feel uncomfortable
- Check that they understand what they should do if they see something online that upsets or worries them
- Use our resources to support the children in your care to stay safe online
- If you have concerns about online abuse and exploitation. You can submit an online report to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) by clicking [here](#)

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INEQE Safeguarding Group has contacted Avakin Life's parent company, Lockwood Publishing, for comment surrounding the nature and safety of the game.

Blocking and Reporting on Avakin Life

- Blocking – Once a user is blocked, they can't contact you or join you in venues throughout the game
- Reporting – You can report a user to the company if you feel they have breached guidelines – this is called filing a 'Grief Report'
- Be aware – There is no way to make an account completely private