



Helpline: 020 7704 2040

CRIME, SAFETY AND HOOK UP APPS ADVICE FOR GAY & BI MEN

Using apps for dates and hook ups is a part of many people's lives. Apps are a tool for contact and communication and have the advantage of directness and privacy, which can be helpful for those who don't feel it is safe to be 'out'.

However, privacy also creates challenges. Apps can be used as a tool to exploit people and commit crimes. This document aims to give you helpful tips and advice about using apps and to set app-facilitated crime in a context that does not blame victims.

It is not your fault

Galop says very clearly to anyone who has been the victim of crime online or from someone they've met online/via a hook-up app that it is not your fault. Using apps, especially to meet for sex, does not give anyone permission to commit a crime against you or force you to do anything without your consent.

There are things you can do to feel more empowered and confident about using apps for dates and hook ups but it is not the responsibility of victims to stop sexual assault and crime: it is the responsibility of those who do it.

Anyone can potentially be a victim, however experienced, savvy or safe an app user you are. It is not your fault. But that doesn't mean we have to be passive in the face of abuse committed via apps. Here's our advice:

Speak Up

If you've been the victim of a crime by someone you met via an app, don't keep quiet about it. You have a right to report it to the police and a right to get informed, non-judgemental support. If you aren't sure whether you want to report or you need support, contact Galop.

Trust Your Instincts

If your gut feeling is telling you that something isn't right or you are not comfortable with a situation, listen to yourself and say no this time. You may miss a hot date but your safety is more important. Cut your losses and end the contact as soon and as safely as you can, if possible. Don't worry about seeming to be rude or making a fuss. If you are still at the online stage, just end the contact. If you are already with someone and can't leave or get the person to leave safely, then get help as soon as you can.



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Protect Your Profile

It's easy to overshare on social media. It feels intimate and immediate. It's private. But you don't need to reveal everything about yourself and your life, indeed it is sensible to withhold private information at first. Use all available options to choose who you relate to and about what. There are a number of useful websites with practical information about protecting your profile and responding to online abuse:

www.stoponlineabuse.org

www.getsafeonline.org

Meeting Someone In Person

There is sensible advice available about meeting people via apps:

www.getsafeonline.org/social-networking/online-dating/

www.brook.org.uk/your-life/online-dating-and-staying-safe

However, this does not always protect you from those who are out to commit a crime and that is not your fault. So take all the safety advice you can get but remember no one has the right to commit a crime against you, whatever the circumstances.

Good Ideas

In addition to the usual safety advice, these ideas might be useful:

Ask around – What do other people think about the person you are planning to meet? Are there warning signs that others have been hurt by this person?

Keep your phone and GPS on – This makes it possible for friends (or the police) to know where you are. *This advice does not necessarily apply if you are at risk of domestic abuse or being stalked.*

Take a screen shot of the person's profile – People can delete their profiles if they think you might tell someone about something unacceptable that they did.

Meet somewhere public and take a few minutes to chat - If you get the gut feeling that something isn't right, make your excuses and leave.

If you do go back to someone's place or you go straight there – Take a photo on your phone of the street (preferably the street name) and then the door you enter.

Look up the transport options or have your local bus service or cab info already stored on your phone.

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Think about whether it's useful to have a code word with a couple of friends so that if you text, direct message or ring with that word the friends know you are in trouble and will call the police. The GPS on your profile can let friends know where you are.

Use technology to your advantage – To get help, find your way home, locate nearby services (e.g. the local police station), to take snapshot and photograph evidence.

Here are some good tips: www.pinknews.co.uk/2016/11/23/15-ways-you-can-stay-safe-on-grindr-and-other-dating-apps/

If You Are the Victim of Crime

If you experience any sort of abuse or crime online or in person by someone you meet via an app, don't keep quiet about it. Galop runs services around hate crime, harassment, domestic abuse and sexual violence and we can give you independent, confidential advice, support and advocacy.

You can contact Galop if you've sexual assault by someone you met via an app, or you're confused about what happened to you, Our specialist service is available, whether or not you decide to talk to the police.

020 7704 2040

referrals@galop.org.uk

Online reporting and web chat at www.galop.org.uk

If you've been sexually assaulted you can also get immediate forensic and medical help from the Havens, London's Sexual Assault Referral Centre. The Havens offers confidential forensic, medical and counselling help to everyone who has experienced sexual assault in the last year. It is open 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week. You do not have to talk to the police if you don't want to.

Tel: 020 3299 6900 to find out where to go and make an appointment

www.thehavens.org.uk

Galop is the leading LGBT anti-violence organisation. You can contact Galop in these ways:

Online: www.galop.org.uk (confidential online reporting and web chat on the home page)

Helpline: 020 7704 2040

Email: referrals@galop.org.uk