



**September 2024.**

**Mobile phones are a fantastic way for children and young people to stay connected with their parents, carers and friends, especially as they begin a new school year.**

However, issues may arise if our children and young people excitedly share their mobile phone number with other pupils in their new school year group and even wider, as they join 'WhatsApp' group chats or other social media group chats. *The minimum age for WhatsApp users in the UK is now 13yrs old.*

This can lead to children and young people sharing their mobile phone number with an entire year group and in what could amount to over one hundred school pupils on a particular group chat!

The reality of this is that they do not all know each other. They will all be from different backgrounds with various levels of online awareness, and they will be seeing messages, images and video footage which you, as a parent or carer, would not like them to see but which is out with your control.

This situation can be difficult and distressing in relation to what is read or seen, and internet matters provides guidance in that regard. [Inappropriate content helplines and resources](#) | [Internet Matters](#)

Coupled to this, peer pressure could lead to bullying. [Cyberbullying facts and advice](#) | [Internet Matters](#)

WhatsApp is by far the most used messaging App although there are many other similar messaging Apps. It allows users to send instant messages only to contacts that they have added to their WhatsApp account.

Messages are sent 'one to one' or within a 'group conversation' and for all messages sent, WhatsApp sends "read receipts" telling the sender their message was **delivered, read, seen, or played**. These settings can be changed, see the 'safety guide for parents' link below for more information.

In relation to a group chat on any social media platform, even those as a parent or carer you are involved with, you have no control over what will be sent, seen or shared, so it is worthwhile having a conversation with your child or young person about this. [Conversation starters for your child's online life](#) | [Internet Matters](#)



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We know peer pressure can lead to people of any age doing something they otherwise would not do, online or offline, so this awareness during your child or young persons' early years is especially important. Viral online trends attract many children and teens. Most are harmless, but some challenges can be dangerous.

The following link will support your understanding of online challenges and potential risks.

[How to prevent harm from online challenges | Internet Matters](#)

Our colleagues at Internet Matters have additionally created excellent resources to inform you of how the social media platform "WhatsApp" operates and how you can put measures in place to protect what your child or young person sees on the app and awareness on the app's security settings.

[What is WhatsApp? A safety guide for parents | Internet Matters](#)

Children are accessing the internet on a range of devices, the role of protecting them from things they may not be ready for online can be a worry and a challenge. The link below is populated with a useful video and additional guidance for keeping your children safe whilst online and using apps.

[Guide to monitoring apps for parents | Internet Matters](#)

There are many social media apps available, and the link below will support you with additional awareness and step by step guides in relation to parental controls and privacy settings.

[Social Media Parental Controls and Privacy Settings | Internet Matters](#)

Our colleagues at the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) have produced a free action plan resource for individuals and families to improve their personal cyber security. This online resource, which takes 2-3 minutes to complete, will provide you with step-by-step guidance on how to implement the suggested recommendations based on your response to the questions asked.

[Stay protected online with a Cyber Action Plan - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

This Cyber Byte was sent out for your information by

Police Scotland Cybercrime Harm Prevention Team

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