

Keeping Safe Online

A Guide for Children and Young People.
Created with Children and Young People in
Barnsley.



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BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council



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Introduction

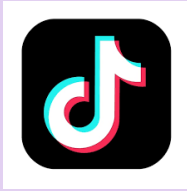
This guide has been created with help from children and young people across the borough, who told us the apps that they most commonly use, the issues that they encounter, and how they stay safe while using them.

On the following pages, you will find details about specific apps that young people use, settings that you can enable to stay safe online, and where to go for help if you have concerns or worries.

Remember

You can always get advice from staff and trusted adults at your school or college – ask to speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Head of Year / Student Support Officer or Form Tutor.

These are the most popular apps used by children and young people



TikTok

Age restriction = 13+

Purpose: Share, create & watch short videos. Gain 'followers' who like, comment, and view your posts. For users registered as 16+, their profile is 'public' by default and their videos can be viewed and downloaded by anyone.

Private Messaging: Users aged 16+ can send private messages to one another. These can be from anyone online.

Downloading: Unless it is turned off in settings, people can download a copy of your videos to their device to keep forever.



Instagram

Age restriction = 13+

Purpose: Share content that followers can interact with. Instagram may push a narrative of a 'perfect world', and you may feel pressured to post perfect, polished images of yourself.

Location sharing: Users can tag their location on their profile posts and in stories. This could leave you open to risks, such as strangers gaining access to your location.

'Supervision': A parental control offered by Instagram. Parents create their own Insta account and then link it, but the young person needs to accept an 'invitation link' for this to work – it is their decision. Parents can then set break reminders and view followers, but not read private messages or block accounts.



Snapchat

Age restriction = 13+

Purpose: Lets users exchange pictures and videos (snaps), with effects and filters, which then disappear. The 'disappearing snap' feature of Snapchat can lure you into a false sense of security, and you may send images that they would not usually send.

Snap Map: A feature that shows the real time location of all users on an interactive map. This feature is 'on' by default. You will need to activate 'Ghost Mode' to stop your location from appearing on the map - Click on your profile icon, then scroll to snap map. Click on it, then the cog in the top right corner to enable ghost mode.

Disappearing messages: Users can screenshot content and share it: if they take a picture of their phone with another device, you will never even know. If someone is sending inappropriate content over Snapchat, it can be much harder to prove - report their content immediately by pressing the message or snap. To report or block someone, press, and hold on their Snapchat ID, and select 'Manage Friendship'.



Purpose: Send messages, make voice & video calls, and share documents. By default, WhatsApp automatically sets privacy settings to public – these need to be changed in your settings.

End-to-end encryption: A form of message security; It means that only the sender and recipient can read what is sent – moderators (including WhatsApp themselves) and third parties cannot view any of the content – risky for children using the app.

<p>WhatsApp Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Groups and Communities: Anyone can add a user to a group unless their group privacy settings are changed within the app. 'Communities' works like online forums. A community might contain multiple groups that people can join and chat to others in.</p> <p>Location tracking (Live Location): Automatically turned off on WhatsApp. When turned on, users can see your live location – keep this off in settings to minimise risk.</p>
 <p>Facebook Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Purpose: Users add other people as 'friends' in an online network and share updates about themselves.</p> <p>News: Remember that not everything that you read on Facebook is necessarily true, and sometimes people can share material that is offensive – be sure to report any content like this.</p> <p>Marketplace: People can advertise and sell goods / services in their local areas. The safest way to use the marketplace is by asking an adult to message the seller on your behalf. Watch out for scams, no matter how genuine someone may seem, and never go to collect an item from someone without an adult present.</p>
 <p>Messenger Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Purpose: An instant messaging app linked to Facebook, popular for group chats, sharing images and videos. This app is also popular for playing games with friends.</p> <p>'Secret conversations': Messages timed to disappear can be sent to others, similar to Snapchat. They may be used to send bullying or sexual messages.</p> <p>'Message requests': Users who are not friends on Facebook can still message other Messenger users through this folder. This could open opportunities for scams or bullying. Ensure only Facebook friends can stay connected by switching off the message requests section, which is 'on' by default.</p>
 <p>YouTube Age restriction = 13+ without parent/guardian</p>	<p>Purpose: A popular video sharing and social media platform. Videos can be commented on, liked, and shared.</p> <p>YouTube Kids: A separate app made for children under 13. This app offers controls to restrict search and content, set time limits, and manage watch history to help promote internet safety.</p> <p>Subscribing to Channels: Subscribe to channels that you feel comfortable with. This creates a feed of safe videos to browse and watch in the 'Subscriptions' area of YouTube.</p>
	<p>Purpose: X is the new name for Twitter - an online 'micro-blogging' social network. It is known for its short character limit of 280 characters and its use of hashtags, threads, and trending topics.</p> <p>Location reveal: Tweets can be geotagged, which could broadcast a user's exact location (or favourite places to hang out) to others.</p> <p>Privacy: All Tweets are public by default, meaning anyone can view, reply, and retweet regardless of their age or beliefs.</p>

<p>X / Twitter Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Adult use: A higher ratio of adults on the platform means age-inappropriate content is more likely to be viewed by younger users.</p>
 <p>Roblox Age restriction = 7+</p>	<p>Purpose: Users can play and create games for others to play. It also includes social features such as friend requests and chats where players can design an avatar and speak to others while they play.</p> <p>Risks: Roblox has previously faced criticism following harmful sexualised content being prevalent on the platform.</p> <p>Parental Controls: Safety settings are enabled by default for children under 13 - which is why registering with a real date of birth is important. Most games have a public server, which means that users can interact with strangers if safety settings are not in place.</p>
 <p>Discord Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Purpose: an instant messaging social platform, in which people enter 'servers' so they are part of a group – commonly used for gaming communities. Some servers are NSFW (Not safe for work – often meaning inappropriate/ adult content) and may have content age-inappropriate for younger users.</p> <p>Servers: All users can create their own server for free. Servers are based on individual topics or interests. They can be public or private. Once granted access to a server, users can participate in an open chat with other users from all over the world.</p> <p>Privacy: User accounts also cannot be made explicitly private. The privacy setting 'Keep Me Safe' can be enabled – it scans all direct messages to block explicit content and restricts access to NSFW servers.</p>
 <p>Reddit Age restriction = 13+</p>	<p>Purpose: A social news website and forum where users can upload, share, and promote content. It's made up of thousands of different communities that users can subscribe to, on topics such as popular hobbies, memes, and media.</p> <p>Subreddits: A subreddit (or sub) is a community based on a particular topic or purpose. Users subscribe to subs that interest them and can either browse individual subs or visit their home page.</p> <p>Controversial Subs: Reddit may create communities that reinforce dangerous or unhealthy beliefs, with some communities being accused of encouraging incel behaviour, racism, and other extremism.</p> <p>Anonymity: Users can remain anonymous, with only a unique username differentiating their profile from anyone else's. This means young people could be targeted by predators. Users masking their identity is a concern when young people might be tricked into believing they are talking to 'friends' or other teenagers.</p>



Twitch

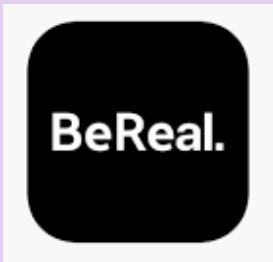
Age restriction = 13+
(under 18s must have parental consent)

Purpose: A live streaming video platform which allows creators to broadcast and users to watch content, usually about games, including eSports.

Gifting and Spending: Twitch users can follow other people’s channels for free or subscribe for a fee. Users can interact with the live streamer through a chat feature and can even donate in-platform currency called ‘bits’ to support them. Young people might feel pressured or encouraged to spend money on streamers.

Risks: Parents and carers cannot enable safety measures or monitor content. Once an account has been made, the user is able to livestream immediately, so children may livestream themselves to strangers without thinking of the consequences.

Privacy Settings: All profiles are public and cannot be made private. Anyone can access and watch livestreams without registering.

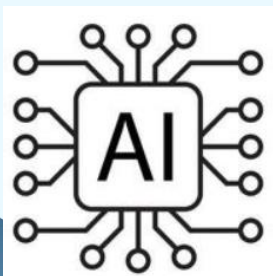


BeReal.

Age restriction = 13+

Purpose: A once-a-day photo sharing app – users are given a 2-minute window to share a photo of themselves and their surroundings to their friends. There are no filters or opportunities to stage the ‘perfect photo’ – what you see is what you get. It is formatted to make the user show their ‘real self’.

Risks: If you accept contacts that you do not know, it is easy to build up a picture of routines in daily life, for example, school uniforms, bus stops and regular locations. The format of the app leads to addiction issues, with users prioritising it because of the time limits it sets. Safety settings are lacking – there are no privacy features, no parental controls, and no blocking abilities on this platform: just reporting. A ‘discovery’ page encourages interaction between complete strangers and could lead to communication on other apps with messaging functions (like Instagram or WhatsApp).



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Purpose: Artificial intelligence (AI) makes it possible for machines to learn from experience, adjust to new inputs and perform human-like tasks. More than just a fancy chatbot, AI opens up a new world of possibilities for learning, creativity and problem-solving.

Risks:

Cyberbullying and sexual harassment: The use of AI-generated text or images to bully or sexually harass children/young people.

Disinformation and fraud: The use of AI-generated text (that seems real and trustworthy) to scam or spread untrue information. You can’t trust everything that you read online, even with AI!

Bias or discrimination: Bias in the design of systems or their underlying data might lead to discrimination against some groups.

Advice to help you stay safe on social media

For further help and guidance on how to use safety and privacy features on the social media apps you use, the UK Safer Internet Centre has provided a useful checklist to guide you through this for a range of apps. Visit [Social Media Checklists - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Below are a few other things to think about when keeping safe online.

Location Settings: Advice for keeping you safe online

- **Don't** share your local information on your social media posts, on videos, on any public forums or chat groups you may be part of / with people you don't know.
- **Do** view the location settings in the app to ensure your location is set to private. Remember, if you share your location publicly, it may be seen by people you don't know.
- **Do** set your account to private.

Privacy Settings: Advice for keeping you safe online

In the UK, it is a criminal offence to make, distribute, possess or show any indecent images of anyone aged under 18, even if the content was created with the consent of that young person.

- **Don't** have an open account. Only accept requests for 'friendship' or 'followers' from people that you know and trust – preferably in real life.
- **Don't** give away details about your real life online, such as where you go to school or hang around with your mates.
- When you download a new app, always **check your settings**, and read their advice on how to report and block. This is especially important in apps such as Snapchat, where the messages disappear after a certain time limit.

Age Rating = 13+

If you are aged **13 – 15** years old, many apps (such as TikTok and Instagram) will automatically sort out your privacy settings for you. But, if you are **16 or over** – *or your account thinks that you are* - you will need to adjust your settings manually to stay safe.

Our research tells us that many children in Barnsley, including primary age children, lie about their age to get access to apps such as TikTok: If you find that this is the case, talk calmly to your child about the risks involved and take action to keep them safe.

Direct Messages: Advice for keeping you safe online

Do you really know who is 'sliding into your DMs'?

If you are under 16, private messaging is automatically turned off on some apps, such as TikTok, but even then, we recommend that you keep this feature off: it can be really dangerous to have a public account where people can message you whatever content they want.

Direct messaging leaves you at risk of hurtful or offensive comments 24/7, with no escape, so be sure to block anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.

'Finstas': Advice for keeping you safe online

A 'finsta' refers to a secondary account that you may set up, where you hide your identity and profile, with access only available to a chosen group of friends or followers. You can use any platform, including Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. You may be using a pseudonym to avoid using your real name, to remain anonymous.

However, Finstas can still put you at risk of being exposed to content that might lead to harm such as indecent images, expression of hateful or abusive language aimed at certain groups, or bullying. Equally, if you are posting concerning content, believing you have anonymity, be aware that others with access to the account may take screenshots of your posts and send them to others, or your identity as the account owner, may be revealed.

A risk of posting content online is that people will end up with permanent access to it: anything that you put online has the potential to be online forever.

You might not be thinking about it now, but in future, things that you post may come back to haunt you; many influencers have been caught out by content they posted when they were younger. Things that you post privately may end up being leaked to family, friends, and even your schoolteachers, so think really carefully about what you post. Even with a private account, anyone can see your profile info on most apps, so don't share your full name or where you go to school or college.

Inappropriate Messages & Reporting

Sending Inappropriate / Indecent Images or Messages: Advice for keeping you safe online

Have you sent an indecent image ('nude') to someone, and you now regret it? Are you worried about it being posted online?

There is always something that can be done if an image or video is posted online, either by yourself or someone else.

The main problem with apps like Snapchat is that people think that because messages and pictures disappear, they are gone forever – this is not always the case. Although it usually notifies you when someone screenshots your image, this does not always stop people – if a picture of their phone is taken with another device, you would never even know that your content had been copied.

The best option is to **tell an adult that you know and trust**, such as your parents or a trusted adult at school or college. **But, if you are embarrassed and do not want to, you can confidentially report sexual images and videos of yourself and remove them from the internet at:**
www.childline.org.uk/report-remove



Has someone sent you something inappropriate or messages that make you feel uncomfortable?

If you are worried about online sexual abuse or the way that someone has been communicating online, let CEOP know at:

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>



What kind of things do people report to CEOP?

Some of the things children and young people have reported include:

- Someone online has asked me to send them nude images
- I shared a nude image with someone online and they are threatening me
- I did something that I was embarrassed about on webcam, and someone has turned nasty towards me
- Someone I do not know is asking me to live-stream and do things I do not want to do
- Someone online kept asking me to meet them face-to-face and I feel pressured by them

- Someone online was talking to me about sex, and it made me feel uncomfortable
- Someone online is putting pressure on me to do things I do not want to do
- Someone I met in an online game keep trying to talk to me privately

If you do not want to report something, but just need info and advice about online relationships and safety, visit <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Topics include reporting and blocking on social media, and what to do if you are worried about nudes.

Is your boyfriend / girlfriend harassing you online, pressuring you to send nudes or controlling your online activity?

Visit That's Not Cool for advice about teenage relationships when they turn toxic:

<https://thatsnotcool.com/>

Online Bullying

Bullying includes the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.

Online bullying, sometimes called cyberbullying, can include posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, excluding a person or group. You may experience bullying from people you know or from strangers. The bullying may be one-on-one or by a group.

There are other types of behaviours, that can happen face-face or online, which are bullying or can cause others to bully.

Baiting is where a person intentionally 'baits' someone to become angry by saying or doing something to annoy them, knowing it will lead to an angry, aggressive or emotional response.

Banter (or 'bantz') can be described generally as playful teasing between friends, usually an equal or generally funny exchange. However, at times, banter goes too far and becomes mean and offensive, and sometimes leads to bullying. Just because a person says that their behaviour towards you is meant as banter, doesn't mean it is.

If you are being bullied, either in person or online, you can speak to a member of staff or trusted adult at school or college, your parent/carer or get help and advice from these websites:

<https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>

<https://www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/advice-for-young-people/>

<https://each.education/homophobic-transphobic-helpline>

Help and support for homophobic, biphobia and/or transphobic bullying.

Free, confidential (in most cases – see website) helpline: 0808 1000 143. Open Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 4:30pm. You can also contact them online for the same support.

Group Chats, Extreme Views & Being Asked to Download Content

With social media being such a big part of your life, it can be easy to make friends online who you have never met in ‘real life’. They might be someone in a group chat that you have been added to, someone with similar interests to you that you have met on a forum, or someone who you game with online.

At the start, you might think that you have a lot in common – otherwise you would not be speaking to them in the first place. They might be keen to be your friend, and you might think they understand you more than other people that you know.

But then, you realise that they have strong views on certain topics, such as:

- Women / girls, sexism, or ‘incel’ type behaviour
- Immigration and race – this might be disguised as being overly ‘proud’ to be white and British, to the point that they dislike other races or types of people in society
- Transgender / non-binary issues or LGBTQIA+

- They might not be very noticeable at first, such as tagging you in a meme or a ‘joke’ about such things to see how you react.
- You might not want to disagree with them, because you feel that they are your friend.
- You might not want to disagree with them in a group chat, as other people might share the same views.

- They might hold status in the game that you play, and you are worried that you will get kicked out of the group if you speak up.

People might ask you to download links, follow links or share material.

Sometimes, this material may be illegal for you to distribute or even possess, so never share it.

If anything like this happens on an app, group chat, or on your team in a game, leave the server, group or team, report and block.

Tell someone you trust about it too – you won't get in trouble.

It is OK to feel upset that you have lost someone who you thought was a friend, but it is never OK to share hate-filled views.

General Advice

<https://childline.org.uk>

Free Helpline: 0800 1111

Open 24 hours.

Childline can help with any problems, day, or night.

It is free – *even if you do not have credit on your phone* – and calls will not show up on any phone bills.

Childline is confidential, which means they will only tell someone else in certain situations – you can find out more on their website about this. You can also email them, or chat online.



<https://www.themix.org.uk/>

Free Helpline: 0808 808 4994

Open from 4pm to 11pm Monday to Friday.

The Mix provides online information, advice, and support on a range of topics, from sex and relationships to housing and money. You can call the helpline, email, webchat, and access counselling services from their website.

Worried about gambling or spending money online?

Big Deal is a place for young people to find information and support related to gambling, such as the danger of buying loot boxes.

<https://bigdeal.org.uk/>



Struggling with your mental health?



If you are feeling low, anxious, or struggling with your mental health, text **'SHOUT'** to **85258** or visit <https://giveusashout.org/>

This free, confidential (unless you are in danger) counselling service is available 24/7.

<https://www.kooth.com/>

If you are aged 11 - 25, a new digital mental health support website is now available in Barnsley. Join for free for text support from professionals, resources to help yourself and a discussion board to ask questions and get support from the community.



Young Minds

Whether you want to understand more about how you're feeling, get information about a mental health condition or find support, our guides can help. If you need help speaking to someone, reach out to Young Minds for help: www.youngminds.org.uk

[Reaching Out For Help With Your Mental Health | YoungMinds](#)

The Open Up Directory by Chilypep

Chilypep have an interactive guide to help children and young people open up about their emotional wellbeing. It also has a map to show you the nearest facilities where you can get support.

Visit <https://chilypep.org.uk/open-up-directory-2/>



