



WhatsApp – What do parents need to be aware of?

WhatsApp is only meant to be used by teenagers and adults over the age of 13. While WhatsApp is generally considered a safe and secure service, it still carries many risks for young children.

Meta (owners of WhatsApp) have lowered the minimum age for WhatsApp users from 16 to 13-years-old in the UK and EU for data protection compliance (terms of service – UK as of February 2024). But like many age restrictions on social media apps, some children and parents may choose to ignore the age-verification within the terms of service and sign younger children up as WhatsApp users. As a result, there are growing concerns around its unsuitability and safeguarding risks for younger children.

WhatsApp – What are the risks of underage use?

- Unwanted contact.
- Unknown user contact (within large groups)
- Pressure to respond.
- Location sharing.
- Inappropriate content.
- Cyberbullying.
- Oversharing.

WhatsApp's main purpose is to send messages to friends. It isn't public in the same way that X (Twitter) is, and people are able to message friends who are already added on their phone. As long as a child only communicates with trusted people who are contacts on their phone, it can be a relatively safe social media app.

However, when a child is part of a larger group chat that includes users outside of their contact list, there are privacy concerns. Users who are not known to the child can view message activity and send messages within the group chat. This situation can potentially put young children at risk. It is essential for parents and carers to be aware of the terms of service, privacy settings and supervise their child's online interactions to ensure their safety.

WhatsApp – Parental Advice for users

- [Hwb Keeping Safe Online – WhatsApp](#)
- [Parent and Kid Reviews on WhatsApp Messenger](#)
- [Parents and Carers advice for WhatsApp](#)