

Online Safety News

APRIL 2026



NEW: WhatsApp Accounts for Under 13s

WhatsApp has introduced **“Parent-Managed Accounts”**, allowing children under 13 to use the app with a parent linked to and managing the account.

WhatsApp say the aim is to allow parents or guardians to set up WhatsApp for pre-teens, with controls that limit their experience to messaging and calling.

What Parents Need to Know



- ✓ **You control who can contact your child** and which groups they can join
- ✓ **Unknown messages are filtered** for you to review first
- ✓ **You receive notifications** about key activity (new contacts, groups, blocking/reporting)
- ✓ **Settings are locked** behind a parent PIN
- ✓ **Features are limited** — no disappearing messages, location sharing, AI, or “view once” content

All messages remain **end-to-end encrypted**.



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Should You Use It?



This won't be right for every child. Just because this is going to exist it doesn't mean every child under 13 needs to be on WhatsApp. Age, maturity, readiness and your availability to set up and monitor correctly, all matter.

WhatsApp is still a form of social media, and **group chats in particular can be challenging**, even with controls in place. Yes, they can send messages, but other content, that might not be appropriate for younger children, can still be accessed.

Key Takeaway



Parental controls can support safer use — but they don't replace guidance and still need to be monitored to ensure they are working correctly.

Regular conversations, knowing who your child is talking to, and staying involved remain the most important factors.

Find Out More

You can read the full announcement directly from WhatsApp here: [WhatsApp Blog – Parent-Managed Accounts](#)

WhatsApp FAQ – Setup Guide
[WhatsApp FAQ – Setting Up a Parent-Managed Account](#)

Online Grooming in Gaming: Signs to look out for

Children rarely speak up about online grooming straight away as often they don't realise it is happening until harm has occurred — but there are often small signs.

Possible Warning Signs

- ⚠ Becoming withdrawn or upset after gaming or time on their phone
- ⚠ Being secretive about who they're talking to or playing with
- ⚠ Sudden anxiety about school or friendships
- ⚠ Losing interest in platforms they previously enjoyed
- ⚠ Requests for money, gift cards, or unexplained purchases
- ⚠ Noticeable distress after messages, especially late at night

If You're Concerned



Stay calm — if your child comes to you, they've done the hardest part. Remember not to react in panic or anger, this can prevent them speaking up again in the future.

Save evidence — screenshot messages, usernames and profiles before blocking

Block and report the account on the platform

Report to CEOP: ceop.police.uk

Contact IWF ([Eliminating Child Sexual Abuse Online](#) | [Internet Watch Foundation IWF](#)) if images have been shared

Childline (0800 1111) offers free, confidential support

Remind your child *IT IS NOT THEIR FAULT and they are NOT in trouble.*

If something feels off, trust your instinct and gently open a conversation.



VPNs: What Parents Should Know

A **VPN (Virtual Private Network)** is designed to make internet use more private and secure.

However, if your child is using one, it can also allow them to:

- Bypass Wi-Fi restrictions
- Access blocked or age-restricted content such as adult content
- Get around parental controls
- Hide browsing activity

This means some of the safeguards you've put in place may no longer work as intended.

For a more detailed understanding of how VPN's work:

NSPCC guide for parents:
[VPNs and online safety: a guide for parents and carers](#)

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