

The Fraud & Scam Bulletin

AUGUST 2026

Your monthly update direct from West Mercia Police on the latest
scams and frauds

WHAT ARE YOUR CHILDREN DOING ONLINE THIS SUMMER?



What's almost certain is that they'll be going online more than in term time ... for entertainment, keeping in contact and chatting with their friends, gaming, and the multitude of other things kids use the Internet for.

With all the additional time spent doing more online, how can you be sure that the young people in your family are safe from the issues they can encounter every day?

There are a host of social networking sites available online and many of these sites use live video as a means to communicate or involve sending photos. This leaves the way open for people to send images which may be inappropriate.

Check out these easy-to-follow tips to help your child enjoy a safe and confident experience online.

- **Chat regularly** with your child about what they do online and get them to show you. Get to know about recent technologies and trends. Talk about the potential positives, such as learning and staying in contact with family and friends, as well as negatives such as oversharing, seeing inappropriate content, cyberbullying, stranger danger, uncontrolled spending of money and spending too much time online. *Set a good example yourself.*
- **Steer your child** towards safe searching, websites, and apps. Check what they are watching and/or sharing on streaming sites like YouTube and TikTok. Encourage them to use child-friendly platforms like YouTube Kids.

- Gaming, social media, picture/video sharing and many other apps and websites have lower **age limits** for a reason, so you should make sure your child does not access those when they are underage.
- **Download apps only from recognised sources** like App Store and Google Play. Add your own email address when setting up accounts and apps for your child.
- **Discuss and agree boundaries and rules** from a young age, including appropriate online usage, always being respectful and how much time they spend online. Empower them but remember they do not have the experience or maturity to always make the right decisions.
- Consider setting up **parental control software and apps** on computers, mobile devices and games consoles, privacy features on social networking sites, safety options on search engines and safe location settings on devices and apps. Turn on your ISP's **family filters**.
- **Stay familiar with** new game and social media trends, especially those attracting negative publicity because they may be violent, encourage gambling or leave the way open for messaging random strangers, enabling hence potential grooming or other types of coercion.
- For **video calls**, ensure your child's safety by updating to the platform's latest version, following its safety advice, and checking that call invitations and replies can't be seen by anybody outside the agreed call group.
- **Online gaming** is widely recognised as having many developmental benefits for young people but talk to them about potential negatives like chatting to strangers, in-game purchases (like loot boxes, skins, and cheats), and overdoing screen time.
- Talk to your child about **misinformation, disinformation, and fake news**. Tell them not to believe or share everything they see or read, especially in these days of sponsored 'news' and AI-generated images, videos, and text.
- Warn your child about **confidential information, personal details and images/video** about themselves or others they share in posts, profiles, messages, and chats. Consider what you share yourself.
- Without being controlling, **keep an eye on your child's online activities** and know how to recognise the signs of something not being right. For example, criminals have exploited increased online use for recruiting children into illegal activities such as cybercrime and drug muling.

For more information,

www.getsafeonline.org/personal/article-category/safeguarding-children

Please feel free to share these messages with any vulnerable friends, relatives or neighbours.

If you have fallen for a fraud,

Report it to **Report Fraud (formerly known as ACTION FRAUD)** on **0300 123 2040** or via www.reportfraud.police.uk

Scam Text messages can be forwarded to 7726 to help phone providers take prompt action and block numbers that generate spam on their networks. You can also report Scam mobile calls by texting 7726 with the word "Call" followed by the fraudulent caller's phone number.

Forward Fake Emails received to report@phishing.gov.uk

If you think your bank account or personal banking details have been used fraudulently, then use the short phone number - **159** - to contact the Fraud Prevention Department of most major UK banks.