



Safe Use of Social Media: Advice for Adults and Children

In today's digital world, social media can be a great way to stay connected, share experiences, and keep in touch with friends and family. But it also brings real risks — from scams and online abuse to cyberbullying, harassment, and exploitation. We want everyone in our communities around Wolverhampton to enjoy the benefits of social media while staying safe, whether you're a parent, guardian, or young person.

Here's some clear, practical guidance for using social media responsibly and safely.

For Everyone — Simple Rules to Stay Safe Online

Use strong security settings

Always use strong, unique passwords for each of your online accounts. When available, activate two-factor authentication (2FA) — this adds a second layer of protection beyond just a password.

Take advantage of privacy settings and limit how much personal information you share online. Think carefully before posting: once something's out there, you may lose control over who sees or copies it.

Be careful what you share

Don't publicly post details like your home address, school address, your routine, or real-time location. These can be used by criminals or opportunists to track or exploit you.

Think twice about posting photos, especially of children — or any images you wouldn't want widely shared. Once published, images can travel far beyond your intended audience.

Watch out for suspicious contact or behaviour

Be alert if you receive unsolicited messages, friend requests, or contact from strangers — especially if they ask for personal info, images, or make unusual requests.

Never feel pressured to meet in person with someone you only know online. If someone suggests it — tell a trusted adult or report it.

Know how to report abuse or suspicious activity

If you or someone you know experiences cyberbullying, harassment, threatening messages or exploitation: report it. You can contact West Midlands Police on 999 (in an emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

You can also request support from relevant helplines or third-party organisations — whether you're a victim yourself or helping someone vulnerable.



Advice Specifically for Parents, Carers & Young People

Social media is an important part of many young people's lives. But because it can be risky, especially for minors, it's vital to approach it with care and awareness.

Talk and set boundaries

Keep lines of communication open — talk regularly with your children or those you care for about what they do online, who they talk to, and how certain interactions make them feel.

Agree on rules: for example, when and where devices can be used, what can (and can't) be shared, and which apps or games are allowed.

Use age-appropriate settings, parental controls & monitor when needed

Respect age restrictions on social media platforms and apps: many are intended for older teens.

Consider activating parental controls and limiting contact to people your child actually knows. Block or report suspicious contacts.

Help them understand online risks — including from strangers and from their peers

Explain that some people online may not be who they claim to be. Fake profiles and false identities are often used to deceive or manipulate.

Warn them about potential dangers like “sexting,” “sextortion,” cyberbullying, or online harassment — and make sure they know they can talk to you if anything feels wrong or scary.



Recognising Digital Abuse, Cybercrime & Online Threats

Social media misuse isn't always harmless — sometimes it's criminal. That's why it's important to know the signs, and what to do if you see them.

Digital abuse can take many forms: harassment, stalking, threats, impersonation, sharing images without consent, controlling someone's online or real-world life.

Cyber-bullying, “revenge porn,” cyber-flashing and “sextortion” are all serious, harmful actions that can involve children or adults.

If you're affected by any of this — either directly or indirectly — we at West Midlands Police are here to help. Reporting such incidents is not only valid, but essential. If you prefer anonymity, there are services such as Crimestoppers you can use.

Please use the following links for more information

NSPCC
Learning

 **Childnet**



 **Final Thoughts — Stay Connected, Stay Curious, Stay Safe**

Social media doesn't have to be dangerous. Used thoughtfully and responsibly, it can be a space to learn, share, laugh, and keep in touch. But like any public space — physical or virtual — it requires awareness, caution, and care.

To make sure you and others stay safe: use strong security measures; be thoughtful about what you share; talk openly about online experiences; and never be afraid to ask for help or report wrongdoing.

We at West Midlands Police are committed to supporting you — whether you're a parent, a young person, or anyone worried about online safety. If in doubt, reach out. Your safety matters.

Please share this on Social Media and continue to look out for further updates from the team on our X (formerly twitter) page [@WolvesPolice](#)

Any concerns with regards to reporting Hate Crimes, please follow this [link](#).

⚠WMNow is not suitable for reporting crimes ⚠

Please ensure you are still utilising our crime reporting platforms below.

101, Online Webchat & WMP Website – Non emergency crime reporting / check on the progress of your report

[Report a crime | West Midlands Police](#)

999 – Emergency / Ongoing incident