

ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER.



CHANGE IN MINIMUM AGE FOR WHATSAPP

The minimum user age for WhatsApp has recently changed from **16** to **13**. This is part of the series of changes WhatsApp is making to its terms and conditions. The new changes are WhatsApp's response to new European regulations, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, which require companies to be more clear about how they moderate and deliver content.

WhatsApp have provided the following recommendations for user safety and security:

Keeping users safe and secure

We provide a range of tools, features, and resources to keep users safe. For example, we ensure people can't search for your phone number on WhatsApp, and a user can:

- Choose who can contact you
- Control who can add you to group chats
- Hide your personal information like your last seen and online, profile photo, and about
- Leave group chats silently

You can learn more about privacy and safety information for teen users on WhatsApp [here](#).

(Source: [About minimum age to use WhatsApp | WhatsApp Help Center](#))

Wider support for WhatsApp can be found on their help centre website: [WhatsApp Help Center](#)



SNAPCHAT MyAI - A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Snapchat is one of the main social apps used by children from approximately 6-7 years upwards. Snapchat terms of service state that users must be a minimum of **13 years old**. The [Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes](#) published 29 March 2023, reported that 46% of 3-17 year olds are actively engaging with Snapchat (6795 parents asked)

Snapchat has introduced a new feature **MyAI** (chat bot) which cannot be removed within Snapchat.

A useful article explaining MyAI, its features and tips for parents/carers can be found [here](#).

Another helpful article, published by Common Sense Media is the [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Snapchat](#)

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SEXTORTION – WHAT PARENTS/CARERS NEED TO KNOW:

On April 29th, 2024, the National Crime Agency CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection alerted schools and educators about the increasing incidence of 'sextortion,' It is reported that there has been global rise in cases, particularly among boys aged 14-18. **However, it is important to remember sextortion poses a threat to individuals of all ages and genders.**



What is sextortion?

Sextortion is a type of blackmail when someone threatens to share nude images or videos of, or sexual information about, someone online unless they are paid money or agree to do something else for them, such as send more images. Sextortion is a crime and can be committed by an individual or a group of people working together. (source: www.childnet.com)

Where can I find out more?

The [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) has curated a list of useful websites and resources to support and further inform parents/carers and young people. Below are direct links to the resources for parents and carers

NCA CEOP Education – [#AskTheAwkward](#)

Children and young people are better protected with regular, open conversations. Use the [#AskTheAwkward](#) films and help sheets to support you – Talk little. Talk often. Ask the awkward.

Internet Watch Foundation – [TALK checklist](#)

Follow the IWF's TALK checklist to help keep your child safe online.

Internet Watch Foundation – [Advice for parents and carers](#)

Advice and steps to take if your child has been a victim of financially motivated sexual extortion.

SWGfL – [So You Got Naked Online](#)

A resource that offers children, young people and parents advice and strategies to support the issues resulting from sexting incidents

Childnet – [Sextortion](#)

Advice for parents and carers about sextortion, covering how it happens, what you need to know, and how to support your child if they have been targeted

NSPCC Helpline – Phone: 0808 800 5000 **Contact NSPCC for specialist help, advice and support.**

Internet Matters - **What is sextortion? – A guide**

Snapchat - **In-app educational video for Snapchat users**

Remember: If your child has sent a nude or semi-nude image or video of themselves and is concerned that this has been or may be shared online, you can take these 3 steps to try and support them in getting it removed:

1. Use **Report Remove**, a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
2. Use **Take It Down**, a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
3. Report directly to the platform or app that the incident has occurred on. For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit **Internet Matters**.

(source: **Sextortion - Resources - UK Safer Internet Centre**)

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The information in the newsletter is given to help promote the safety of children and young people online.

Every care has been taken to ensure the information and any recommendations in the newsletter are accurate at the time of publishing. Schools must make their own judgements when sharing our recommendations with parents and carers and, where appropriate, always risk assess with their pupils and whole school community in mind.

This newsletter is brought to you by the HFL Education Wellbeing team as part of their online safety support for schools and settings in Hertfordshire. Contact the team at wellbeing@hfleducation.org or call 01438 544464.

HFL Education is a leading national provider of school improvement and business support services, training, and resources, which enable schools, educational settings, and multi-academy trusts to deliver a great education.

We support those we work with to achieve successful long-term outcomes for their children.

We believe that every young person, through access to a great education, should be able to realise their potential, regardless of where they live, their background or circumstances.

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