



18 July 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

Police and schools in the Borough are committed to working together to protect our young people from becoming victims of crime and exploitation. West Midlands Police are sending you this letter about **online safety, and anti-social behaviour (ASB)**. We want you to have enjoyable summer holidays, and hope some of the advice below will help it be a safe one.

It is important that the police, schools and families work together to protect young people. To do this, parents/carers **must** talk to their children about the dangers of the internet and only allow them access to age appropriate apps/websites/games. I want to take this opportunity to remind parents/carers that although they gift devices (mobile phones, tablets, games consoles) they are still the owners of them, and bear the responsibility to ensure children are safe using them. Parents/carers have every right to have the passwords for devices/apps, access them to be intrusive in monitoring usage, and to be able to set boundaries/restrictions on use.

Some adults aren't aware of what type of platforms children can access from their devices, making them susceptible to a host of risks like online grooming and sexual abuse. Most apps are not suitable for very young children unless they're made specifically for them. This is due to the following risks:

- **Inappropriate content-** Anybody can post and share videos, pictures, or ideas on social media. This means children may see things they don't want to, including sexual or violent content.
- **Inappropriate behaviour-** Just like adults, children can feel more confident when they are online as they feel protected by the screen. This can result in them, or their friends, saying or doing something they'd be less likely to do offline, including oversharing.
- **Over-sharing-** Social media lets people share information about who they are and what they like doing with lots of different people. It's easy to share things online that we wouldn't face to face. Once something has been shared, you can never be sure who has seen it, saved it, or shared it.
- **Making friends with people they don't know-** Chatting and meeting new people is the main reason that most social media services exist. This opens up opportunities for adults to contact children online. It's also easy to set up fake profiles, and some adults may even pretend to be children when they're much older. This makes it hard to tell the difference between someone who's genuine and fake. Some people online can also put pressure on children or manipulate them into doing something they don't want to do.

The risks mentioned above relate to some of the incidents we have dealt with in the past few weeks. Other risks include cyberbullying and in-game spending on popular games such as Roblox. Whilst screen time can offer children opportunities to learn and develop new skills at a touch of a button, but like anything, too much of it can have a negative effect on their wellbeing; try to limit screen time to as minimal as possible.

What to do if you are concerned?

You can contact West Midlands Police either on the emergency line by dialling 999, non-emergency on 101 or via webchat at <https://west-midlands.police.uk/contact-us/live-chat>. We understand that not everyone



will feel comfortable speaking to the police and if that is the case, please speak to your child's school. Every school has a designated safeguarding lead who is responsible for working with the local authority who will respond accordingly. The following websites provide beneficial advice:

- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/>
- [Exploitation - Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership \(safeguardingsolihull.org.uk\)](http://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk)

Anti-social behaviour (ASB).

ASB is a range of behaviours that can cause nuisance and annoyance and/or harm and distress to people in their home, neighbourhood, or community. To do this, parents/carers must talk to their children about the impact anti-social behaviour has on individuals, families, and communities. Some common types of anti-social behaviour that young people fall into are:

- **Vehicle nuisance or inappropriate use:** This relates to vehicles being used in acts such as street cruising (driving up and down the street causing annoyance and bothering other road users), vehicle convoys and riding or driving on land other than a road.
- **Rowdy, noisy or inconsiderate behaviour:** This refers to general nuisance behaviour in a public place or a place to which the public have access, such as the bus and trains.
- **Rowdy or nuisance neighbours:** This covers noise nuisance from parties or playing loud music.
- **Littering or drugs paraphernalia:** This includes fly posting and discarding litter, rubbish or drugs paraphernalia in any public place.
- **Animal problems:** This covers any situation where animals are creating a nuisance or people's behaviour associated with the use of animals is deemed as antisocial. It includes uncontrolled animals, stray dogs, barking, fouling and intimidation by an animal.
- **Trespassing:** This is any situation in which people have entered land, water or premises without lawful authority or permission. It ranges from taking an unauthorised shortcut through a garden to setting up unauthorised campsites.
- **Street drinking:** This relates to unlicensed drinking in public spaces, where the behaviour of the persons involved is deemed as antisocial. It also covers unplanned and spontaneous parties which encroach on the street.

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- <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/communities-and-safety/Anti-social-behaviour>
- <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/community-family/antisocial-behaviour>
- <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/antisocial-behaviour/>



If you wish to know more about police work within your community, please consider signing up to West Midlands Police free messaging service: <https://www.wmnow.co.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Sergeant Bruton

Early Help / School Intervention and Prevention Team

Solihull Partnerships

West Midlands Police

If you or your students are aware that other young people in school or the community are carrying weapons, drugs, other illegal substances, you should contact the police directly on 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

If a crime is taking place or a life is in danger, call 999 immediately. Alternatively, you can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Thank you. West Midlands Police.

