

A guide to WhatsApp

We understand that organisations are evolving with new ways of working. This may be the first time you and/or your organisation has started to use WhatsApp to communicate and share information.

Registered Managers Support

Skills for Care supports over 150 local Registered Managers Networks across England. At each network, managers share knowledge, hear from guest speakers and access peer support.

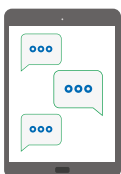
Our networks can be delivered virtually and through WhatsApp groups.

To find out more and to join your local network please visit our [‘local networks for managers’ area](#)



What Is WhatsApp?

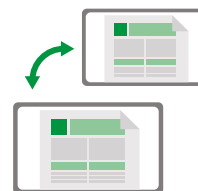
WhatsApp is a messaging application (or app) which allows you to



send information via text and voice messages



make voice and video calls



share images/ documents, user locations, and other media

It offers great opportunities to communicate and share information with your workforce in a fast, effective and efficient way.

“I currently use WhatsApp to communicate important information to my staff that I want them to have immediately. Rather than the usual messages that they read when they come on duty. For example; any relevant information about COVID-19.”

Lesley Kokai, St Michaels Care Home, Stoke

Quick Tip:

To use WhatsApp between people you must ensure the contact has a SMART device (mobile phone, tablet, PC) with internet access and has downloaded the WhatsApp app.



Is WhatsApp Safe?

WhatsApp is protected by 'end to end encryption', which means that no one, not even WhatsApp, can read or listen to messages sent between users. For extra security you will need to set up a password on your device.

“My Manager uses WhatsApp to communicate with various teams. It is very beneficial for sharing success stories as well as ensuring staff health and wellbeing.

We recently undertook a health and wellbeing survey with staff, we used a variety of ways to communicate the survey out to staff, but WhatsApp gave us the highest response rate. Staff said it was easy to access the survey and it only took 2 minutes.”

Kirpal Bilkhu – Churches Housing Association Dudley & District

WhatsApp and data protection requirements

Clear guidance and processes should be produced and shared with all your staff to ensure that information is shared appropriately. Digital Social Care and NHSX have produced guidance on information sharing for staff in social care organisations.

[See the guidance](#)



The focus should be on what information you share and who you share it with rather than how you share it.
- NHSX



Things to consider before setting up WhatsApp

- Some staff may have access to work mobile phones/tablets or they may be using their own personal device, which is known as **Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)**.
- Advise your staff to protect their mobile devices, tablets and the stored data with passwords.
- Digital Social Care have produced a guide to help you protect work/personal phones.

[See the 'Protect mobile devices and tablets' guidance](#)



“I use WhatsApp to communicate with my teams on a daily basis to provide information and send up to date training, for example PPE videos. WhatsApp is so easy to use, saves time and resources. If staff don't want to join or don't have WhatsApp, I will contact them via other methods.

Information is shared during day shifts, not during the evening or nighttime. Confidentiality and GDPR is a priority. We do not discuss residents or staff at all, it is solely for general adult social care information sharing.”

Simone Robinson - Registered Manager, Stubby Leas Nursing Home

Getting started

Things to consider before setting up WhatsApp

Downloading and setting up WhatsApp will differ depending on your device.

[Download the App](#)



[Getting started](#)



Data Usage

WhatsApp requires internet access to function usually your mobile data or Wi-Fi.

No Wi-Fi access?

You will then be automatically using your mobile data to send and receive information on the app.

Quick Tip:

Check your mobile phone plan as you may be limited to the amount of data you have before having to pay additional charges. Watch these quick tutorials for further information and to check how much data you're using:



[Call data usage settings](#) | [Monitor data usage](#)

Your WhatsApp Profile

Once set up you will have a WhatsApp user profile consisting of an image, name and status. You can update these at any point.

Managing your profile

Here's a 'how to manage your profile guide'. Select which operating system your device uses:

- [Android](#) (Samsung, Sony, Blackberry, HTC, Huawei, LG)
- [iOS](#) (Apple devices)

Your privacy settings

You can manage privacy settings and change criteria making you appear more private or open to other WhatsApp users. To see a quick 'how to guide' select which operating system your device uses:

- [Android](#) (Samsung, Sony, Blackberry, HTC, Huawei, LG)
- [iOS](#) (Apple devices)



Quick Tip:

If your organisation currently has a social media policy, you may consider reviewing it to make sure it includes WhatsApp within the guidance.



For example: staff members using personal mobiles may have personal images as a profile image. You need to ensure that visible information like this meets GDPR and your organisation's policies and procedures.

Security passwords

Skills for Care would advise that all the devices being used are password-protected with strong passwords/locks. Should you lose your device this will also avoid your data being shared. Digital Social Care have produced a guidance on setting up passwords.

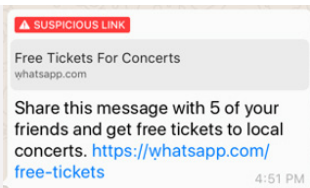
[See the 'using strong passwords' guidance](#)



Extra WhatsApp security

WhatsApp has an additional security function called 'two-step verification'. This means to open WhatsApp you will be required to enter another password.

[Watch the official WhatsApp video on how to switch this feature on](#)



Useful security links:

- [Android suspicious links](#)
- [iOS suspicious links](#)
- [Hoax messages](#)
- [Stopping the spread of fake news](#)
- [Blocking a contact](#)
- [Lost and stolen phones](#)

Keeping WhatsApp updated

Keeping the App updated is crucial to the security of the information held on WhatsApp and its functionality.

[Access more information on keeping the App up to date](#)



Quick Tip:

Update WhatsApp from your phone's application store. WhatsApp may also alert you to update. The latest version contains the newest features and bug fixes for smooth operating.



Responsible use

WhatsApp has adjustable controls to help protect yourself, these features are important to anyone working in the adult social care sector. It includes controlling who can see your information, what you see and with whom you interact and what you share.

Change these settings:

- [Staying safe on WhatsApp](#) | [Watch the short 'How to use WhatsApp responsibly' video](#)
- Digital Social Care has produced a guide that will help you to protect both work and personal phones:

[See 'Protect mobile devices and tablets' guidance](#)



Any message created with a contact will mean they have full access to the conversation and any attachments sent. This means they can re-share this with others on and off WhatsApp.

When using this for work purposes you will need to ensure your data protection and protocols/procedures are in place and are understood.

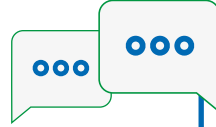
For example: if a staff member shares an image to a WhatsApp group, group members will have that photograph automatically stored on their personal device gallery. This means these photographs will be mixed in with the photographs you have taken on your mobile phone.

[How to stop saving WhatsApp media to your phone's gallery](#)



Consider who you're talking to

- Ensure you don't mix up contacts, especially if you have similar names stored in your address book.
- Assess the tone used when communicating with staff – is the group formal or informal?
- Can the context/information of the message being sent be misinterpreted or misunderstood?



Quick Tip:

An organisations Social Media Policy should be clear that Images of Individuals who are in receipt of care and support, their relatives and visitors must NOT be shared via WhatsApp unless written consent has been given by those individuals.

Turning off notifications

The adult social care sector works around the clock and it is vital for the workforce to keep in touch with each other.

WhatsApp allows you to mute your group notifications. Watch this short video on ['how to turn off your notifications'](#)

- WhatsApp will automatically alert you on messages in a WhatsApp group. These conversations may continue beyond ordinary working hours - It is important to balance this with your own mental wellbeing, allowing yourself and staff some mental space away from work!

WhatsApp on your Computer

We recommend using WhatsApp on a mobile app however you may find it easier to follow the conversation by accessing WhatsApp on your PC.

- [Access WhatsApp on your computer](#)
- [Watch the short video 'How to use WhatsApp on your computer'](#)

Downloading information and attachments

You can send files, documents and other media by attaching the information and sending as a message.

You may want to forward or share this with colleagues or email it to your work email address.

Here are two videos demonstrating how to share information. (There will be some variation to this depending on your mobile device).

- [Watch the 'Downloading media settings' video](#)
- [Watch the 'Sending documents' video](#)



Quick Tip:

When sharing information you still need to be aware of data protection protocols and make sure your staff are too. If you do discuss the people you care for, please use initials rather than names.



How to use groups

[Creating a group](#)



[Group admin-only messaging](#)



[Pinning a group](#)



[Adding another group admin](#)



[Changing group privacy settings](#)



[Leaving a group](#)



Adding/removing contacts from a group [iOS](#) | [Android](#)

[Want to know more about WhatsApp](#)



Let us know how using WhatsApp is going for you!

We'd love to hear how using WhatsApp has been for you and your staff team. Let us know at marketing@skillsforcare.org.uk



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