

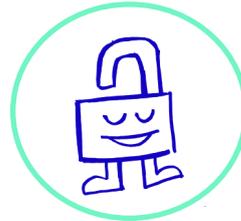
Privacy and safety

This guide explains what we can do to stay safe and keep our data private when we connect at a distance.



It's great so many of us have the tools to stay connected at a distance. Now we want to feel confident choosing and using technology in a way that feels safe and secure to us.

We'll take you through general data protection tips as well as specific ways to maintain your privacy on video calls, in messaging apps and online forums. Use this guide as part of conversations with your local Mind about what tools you want to try. Here are a few things to be



Privacy online

aware of with internet-based communication.

- Firstly, when we use third-party companies (like Zoom and Facebook), they have some control over our privacy. Read on to find out more.
- Secondly, as with meeting in-person, there's a risk that information we share is seen or heard by others. This is where password protecting accounts, finding private spaces to talk, being aware of what you share, and having group confidentiality agreements helps.

While support at a distance, much like in-person, can't be 100% secure, taking the steps we share in this guide, alongside the actions your local Mind takes, minimises the risks.



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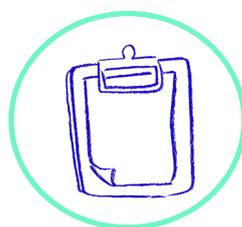


Actions to take

Your local Mind has confidentiality and data protection policies to keep you and your data safe. Here are simple steps you can take too.

- **• Passwords**—visit [Get Safe Online](#)* for how to set up strong passwords for your phone/laptop/computer/tablet and platforms, e.g. Zoom, Facebook.
- **• Log out**—set up and use private accounts and log out when you have finished.
- **• Private**—use a password-protected internet connection, avoid public or guest WiFi if you can. Use your own personal devices if possible.
- **• Cookies**—when you visit an online platform, it may ask you to ‘Accept all’ cookies or manage preferences. Click the option to manage/find out more to see how your data is used. Select cookies essential for the platform to work. • **• Check**—if

you’ve got concerns about the platform you’re using, check their terms and conditions or their website. Talk through concerns with your local Mind.



Points to consider

Here are some points to consider about how your data is used and protected by third party companies.

- **• Policies**—third party, online platforms follow UK policies to process your data.
- **• Essential/non-essential data**—as part of how they work, companies collect some personal data, e.g. name, email, approx. location. They give the option of sharing other data via ‘cookies’.
- **• Social media**—sites like Facebook collect your data when you post publicly, e.g. to tailor advertising to you and to improve their service.
- **• Find out more**—follow links to the most used platforms at the end of this guide for more info.
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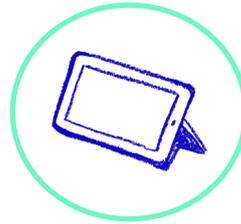
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Mutual respect

When you meet as a group online, your local Mind will help you agree how you'll protect each other's privacy, as you would do in person. This might include the following.

- **Video call**—don't talk about what's shared in the group outside of your sessions.
- **Messaging / online forum**—agree any information, messages and phone numbers aren't shared beyond the group.
- **Messaging / online forum**—check before inviting new people to a group.



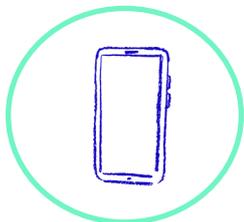
Video calls

Ideas to maintain privacy using video call platforms such as Zoom or Teams.

- **Invite only**—you're sent a unique 'Meeting ID' link and passcode for each call. This means it's unlikely anyone can join who hasn't been invited. Your local Mind host can also lock meetings when they start to make this extra secure.
- **Private place**—try and find somewhere private at home or outdoors where you can talk freely. If that's not possible, use headphones to minimise conversations being overheard. Your local Mind will do the same.
- **Visibility**—it's up to you how visible you are on a call, e.g. what name shows up, if you have your camera on/off. See 'Start using Zoom' for how to do this.
- **Recording** – if your local Mind records a call, they'll ask your permission and give the option to turn your camera/mic off.



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Messaging apps

Ideas to maintain privacy using messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

- **Privacy settings**—messaging apps show some personal details to other users. E.g. in WhatsApp groups we see each other's phone numbers, in Messenger we might see people's Facebook profile. Check your settings to see and select what is kept private and what is shown publicly, e.g. to turn off your location visibility.
- **Your notes**—one-to-one messages with a support worker may be added into your case notes. Ask your local Mind about how these are stored or if you want to see or have information about you deleted from their systems.
- **Encryption**—WhatsApp and Messenger have encrypted end-to-end messages, which means conversations cannot be externally



Online forums

monitored.

Ideas to maintain privacy using social media platforms such as Facebook.

- **Privacy settings**—as with messaging apps, check settings to see and select what's kept private/shown publicly. E.g. with Facebook, go to the Privacy page and select how much of your profile you want visible.
- **Personal information**—think carefully about what you post online. Avoid sharing personal details, like your address or phone number. Photos can also give away personal information. If you think someone has used your data to commit fraud, report it as soon as you can to [Action Fraud**](#).
- **Sharing feelings**—doing this online can help during difficult times. However, some people find they later regret how much they shared. Before posting, try

Privacy and safety

Online forums continued

- **• Triggering content**—if you come across something that upsets you, close the screen or scroll past it. You might want to mute or block that content so you won't see it in future. Afterwards, turn off your device and take a break. Some people find distraction techniques help. If you think the content isn't appropriate, or you find yourself having negative thoughts afterwards, contact your local Mind to discuss it or to get help.

Find out more

Talk through any questions or concerns about privacy and safety with your local Mind. For more from the most popular online platforms follow these links:

- [facebook.com/about/privacy](https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy)
- [whatsapp.com/legal/updates/privacy-policy-eea](https://www.whatsapp.com/legal/updates/privacy-policy-eea)
- zoom.us/gdpr

Ask your local Mind for more of our short guides to help you feel confident and comfortable accessing support online.

These include guides to Start using Zoom and to Prioritise your wellbeing.

*Visit <https://www.getsafeonline.org/personal/articles/passwords/> for help to set secure passwords.

**Visit [actionfraud.police.uk](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk) if you need to report fraud.

