# WHAT TRUSTED ADULTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT: SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

Social Media is often scrutinised as having a negative impact on children's mental health. Children and young people are now growing up in a technology dominated world, and social media plays a major role in their social lives. This balanced guide focuses on both the positive and negative impacts that social media can bring to young people and their mental health.



## POSITIVE IMPACTS



Due to delays in young people getting help for their mental health, such as experiencing low mood, or suffering from anxiety, they may sometimes reach out to access support from others online. Sharing problems or issues with friends, peers and broader social networks can be met with positive reaction, with nearly 7 in 10 teens reporting to receive support on social media during tough or challenging times. Where there are moderated communities which offer support and guidance, children can be provided with a great source of support.



## SUSTAINING FRIENDSHIPS AND **MAKING CONNECTIONS**





There is evidence to suggest that strong adolescent friendships can be enhanced by social media interaction, allowing children to create stronger bonds with people they already know. Online relationships can actually make children more relationship-oriented, thoughtful, and empathic. By sharing comments on pictures, videos and posts, it can create long-term friendships as they can continually keep in touch, even with a distance

## A SENSE OF BELONGING

Online platforms and groups can provide a They can find peers with similar interests and circumstances which can sometimes be difficult to find in real-life. As a result, this can create stronger connections and help to build



# NEGATIVE IMPACTS

## **SELF-ESTEEM & BODY IMAGE**

There are 10 million new photographs uploaded to Facebook alone every hour, providing an almost endless potential for young people to be drawn into appearance-based comparisons whilst online. No one is the same as how they portray themselves online as we tend to only show the best part of ourselves. The pressure to fit-in and conform is huge, which can become a driving force for children to replicate what they see from friends, celebrities and sponsored adverts. This pressure may contribute to anxiety, low mood and a feeling of inadequacy. As a result, it can lead to a feeling of low satisfaction with their own lives.



# FAKE NEWS

The online world provides the opportunity for anybody to upload and share photoshopped pictures, edited video, fake news and even unvetted advice. Children may stumble upon this, which could potentially encourage them make wrong decisions and not get the help that they need. It's important that you teach your child to differentiate between what is true and useful information and what is fake.

## **ADDICTION AND COMPULSIVE CHECKING**

Social media addiction is thought to affect around 5% of teenagers. The Office for National Statistics found that children who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media are more than twice as likely to support poor mental health. Furthermore, compulsive checking due to 'Fear Of Missing Out' has been linked to poor and disturbed sleep, as well as difficulty to relax during evenings. One in five young people say they wake up during the night to check messages on social media, leading them to be three times as more likely to feel constantly tired at school than their classmates who don't use social media during the night.



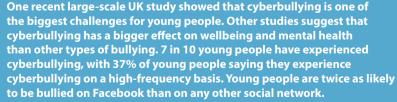


## **CYBERBULLYING**











## Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



## **HELPFUL APPS:**

- **Hub of Hope** https://hubofhope.co.uk/
- Mindshift
- **Smiling Mind**

### **SOURCES OF HELP:**

- Childline, 0800 1111 or visit their website
- **Bullying UK, 0808 8002222**
- Young Minds Parents line, 0808 802 5544

SOURCES: https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/social-media-young-peo-ple-and-mental-health, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuringnationalwellbeing/2015-10-20, https://www.rsph.org.uk/uploads/assets/upload-ed/6be270a-a55f-4719-ad668c2ec7a74c2a.pdf, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cutting-edge-