

## 1 Background

Social media has revolutionised the way we connect with each other. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are now used by one in four people worldwide. Many young people have never known a world without instant access to social networking platforms, and this has transformed the way in which this generation interact and communicate with each other.

## 2 Why does it matter?

Adolescence and early adulthood is a critical time for social and emotional development, and so understanding the effects of social media on health at this stage is of particular importance. Whilst social media can be a hugely positive influence, it also has the potential for being a negative and destructive influence on mental well-being, particularly for children and young people.

## 3 Why does it matter?

Research suggests a typical teenager will check their phone on average 150 times per day and will take an average of 12 selfies before sharing 1, with just under 50% of young people also adding a filter to 'improve' their appearance. Posts on Social Media will therefore often present an 'idealised' view which creates unrealistic expectations.

## 7 Further Information

Please see the links below for more information about mental health and internet safety  
<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/mental-health/>  
<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/internet-safety/>  
<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/new-out-of-hours-mental-health-advice-line-1/>

## 6 How to respond

Professionals need to be aware of both the positive and negative influences of social media. Do not be distracted by the technology, mental health concerns are a safeguarding issue.

Questions for professionals:

Do you routinely ask about social media use when assessing a child/family?

Do you talk to children about safe social media use and their broader online behaviour?

## 4 Key statistics

91% of 16-24 year olds use the internet for social networking: Rates of anxiety and depression in young people have risen 70% in the past 25 years: Social media use is linked with increased rates of anxiety, depression and poor sleep: Cyber bullying is a growing problem with 7 in 10 young people saying they have experienced it.

## 5 Positive experiences

Social networking offers young people an opportunity to understand, the health experiences of others. Sharing problems or issues with friends, peers and broader social networks can be met with positive reaction. Nearly seven in 10 teens report receiving support on social media during tough or challenging times. Social media can act as an effective platform for accurate and positive self-expression, letting young people put forward their best self.



<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/>