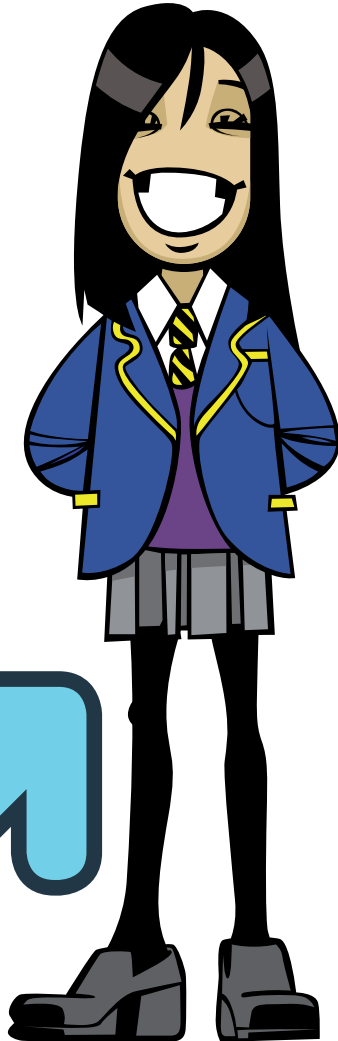


Anything else?



Social media, like other online platforms, can sometimes be used in a really negative way. For the best advice about how to stay safe online, have a look at **The Streetwise Guide to Staying Safe online**.



For More Information:



If you would like more information, please visit our website.

If you have been affected by any of the issues described in this leaflet you can talk to a Counsellor or a Youth Worker at a Streetwise drop-in.

Advice is FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

Produced by: Streetwise
Young People's Project:

Young People's Information,
Advice, Counselling, Sexual
Health and Support Service
for 11-25 year olds.

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The Streetwise guide to Using Social Media



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Who loves social media?



Most of Us! And why wouldn't we?

Social media is a way to catch up with friends, keep in touch, and create and share content. It provides a platform for us to express our creativity, (filter anyone!?) follow the latest trends/ life hacks and keep up to date with our favourite celebrities.

Having said that, it can be very consuming! If you find that the time you spend online begins to have an impact on other areas of your life (school/ college/work, hobbies, exercise, family time, or even your sleep pattern or wellbeing) then think about your social media use and how you might better balance it with other things that have a positive impact on how you feel.



How in control are we over the content we see?



It's true that we do have some degree of choice over the content we choose to engage with, but we are only seeing a small amount of the available content, which really impacts on the actual choice we have! Confusing? It is! Basically, the content you see on your social media is tailored to You! Your previous scrolling habits, social media likes, and in some cases, your personal details(!) are all used to make the content appealing to you. This creates a 'Filter Bubble' and means the content you see is deliberately very similar to content you've looked at before. So while it feels like you are choosing your content, this isn't entirely true.

So what's wrong with that anyway?

Imagine going into a shop because you fancy some sweets. The shopkeeper thinks they know what you like because of what you've bought before, so they always make sure your favourites are placed right in front of you on the counter. Very convenient, and of course you pick what is right in front of you.

Now imagine that underneath the counter, there are a whole load of other sweets you've never seen or come across before! But because they are totally different to what you usually buy, the shopkeeper doesn't even show you them, even though you might really like them. They are not offered to you as a choice.

Social media is just like that. The content we choose from is shown to us based on choices we've made before. Like the sweet shop, there is a whole load more to pick from that's just out of sight and reach!



I saw this on social media so it must be true! Right? Right.....?

Wrong. Anyone can post on social media and there is nothing to stop them posting untrue or incorrect content. And people do this constantly! Anything to get those clicks right? And while 'clicks' can be about 'going viral' and 'being famous' those 'clicks' can turn into money, sponsorship deals, and allegiance to various brands or movements, including manufactured outrage and hate movements.

Challenge what you're seeing. Look at the date it was posted, whether it is from a reliable source, and if you're not sure if it's true – don't share it. Speak to a trusted adult, or a Streetwise Youth Worker – especially if what you've seen is worrying you or particularly surprising to you.

What impact, if any does social media have on my mental health?

While social media can make us feel connected and included, feel loved, feel good and make us laugh, 'heavy use' of social media can impact our self-esteem and wellbeing. It can also make us feel more anxious or depressed depending on the content we view, and how much time we spend viewing it. Like most things, social media in moderation is absolutely fine and fun! But if it is not making you feel good, or the time you are spending on it is impacting on your commitments, relationships or how much you do other things you enjoy, then think about reducing the time you spend on it.

