

# A guide for Schools, Teachers, and Parents on how to help young people think about social media and their futures

## The Facts:

1

Young people who use social media are experts on how social media platforms work and the cultures that exist on social media, and we can learn a lot from listening to them.

2

Young people **can benefit from support, guidance, and conversation** to figure out boundaries, friending/following strategies, and how to interpret the content they are seeing.

3

It's important to understand that **social media platforms are often seen by young people as private spaces**, or spaces where they can hang out with their friends and also figure out who they are, away from prying (adult) eyes, so we need to be respectful of that.

4

Lots of young people today don't have the same kinds of liberties young people in previous generations had to explore, experiment, and make mistakes – think about how far your grandparents, parents, and you could roam around town unsupervised when you were young. How has that changed? Today young people are monitored and controlled by lots of systems and people, so **opportunities to hang out informally have largely gone online**.

5

This one is not new, but many young people are also often very **anxious about their reputations and how they are seen by different people**: friends, teachers, family, and even people they haven't met yet like future bosses, uni lecturers and admissions officers, and friends they might make down the line. Social media makes this more complicated.

6

We need to help young people develop **strategies and tactics** to look after themselves, and each other, without adding to the anxieties and pressures they already face.



## The Tips for Parents and Teachers (from young people themselves, and employers):

1

### **Talk to young people about privacy settings:**

Each platform has a number of different privacy settings that all users should learn about, and check on every now and then (as the default settings can change). Look at your own social media privacy settings, then talk to young people about theirs. Go and look together at the different settings in apps, like Facebook's 'Privacy Checkup'. For private accounts, talk about reviewing and tidying up follower lists every now and then too.

2

### **Reflect together on the purpose of social media – why are you using it?**

Just for friends? Building a business or portfolio of work? Aspiring influencer? To stay in touch with family? Learning about new topics? Connecting with different communities? You can have multiple profiles and use different platforms for different purposes, and modify your privacy settings and your sharing strategies for each.

3

### **Discuss moderating use and curating content:**

We have to take control over our social media, not just time spent on apps (although this can be helpful) but things like unfollowing or muting people or content that is distressing, nudging or training algorithms to show more of or less of the kind of content you want to see, and going back to archive, delete, or edit old posts and tags from time to time.

4

### **Be data conscious:**

Talk about boundaries with information that gets posted (such as any addresses and the names of schools or workplaces) but also explore what data of yours social media companies collect and use (and why they do that).

5

Like any social space, there are risks and dangers with social media, but they can also be fun, help us learn and connect, and reflect on our own lives. Talk to young people about how they look after themselves and their friends, and how to balance the risks and the rewards.