Director of Public Health
Growing Up Online
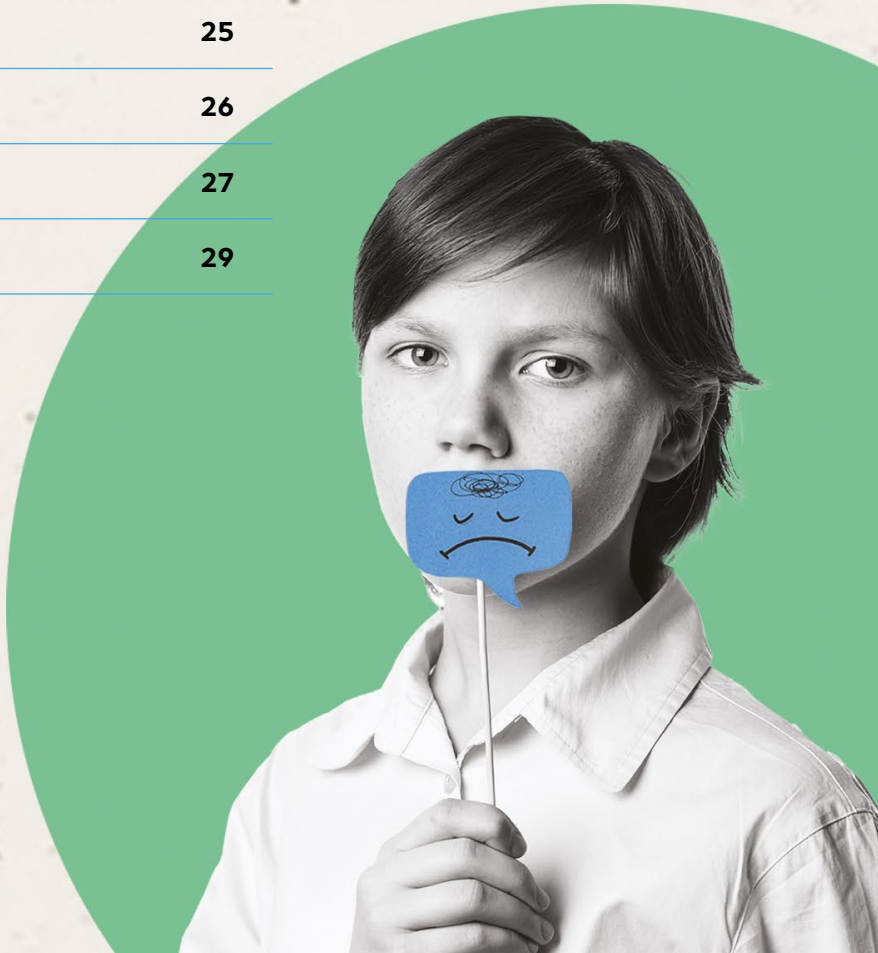
Annual Report 2025

Contents

Foreword – By Councillor Anne–Marie Sonko, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, Warwickshire County Council

Social media has become an integral part of daily life for children and young people, shaping how they connect, learn, and express themselves. While these platforms offer opportunities for creativity and social engagement, they also present risks that cannot be ignored. Evidence increasingly shows that excessive or harmful use of social media can impact physical and mental health, self–esteem, and emotional wellbeing. Exposure to cyberbullying, unrealistic body image ideals, and harmful content can contribute to anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. Emerging evidence also highlights the risks of commercial influences and misinformation which are explored further in this report.

As a local authority, we have a responsibility to understand these challenges and work collaboratively with schools, families, and health professionals to mitigate risks while promoting safe and positive online experiences. This report highlights the current evidence on social media harms and sets out practical steps we can take to protect and support our children and young people. By addressing these issues proactively, we aim to create an environment where digital engagement enhances wellbeing rather than undermines it.

Together, we can ensure that the benefits of technology are balanced with robust safeguards, empowering young people to thrive both online and offline.
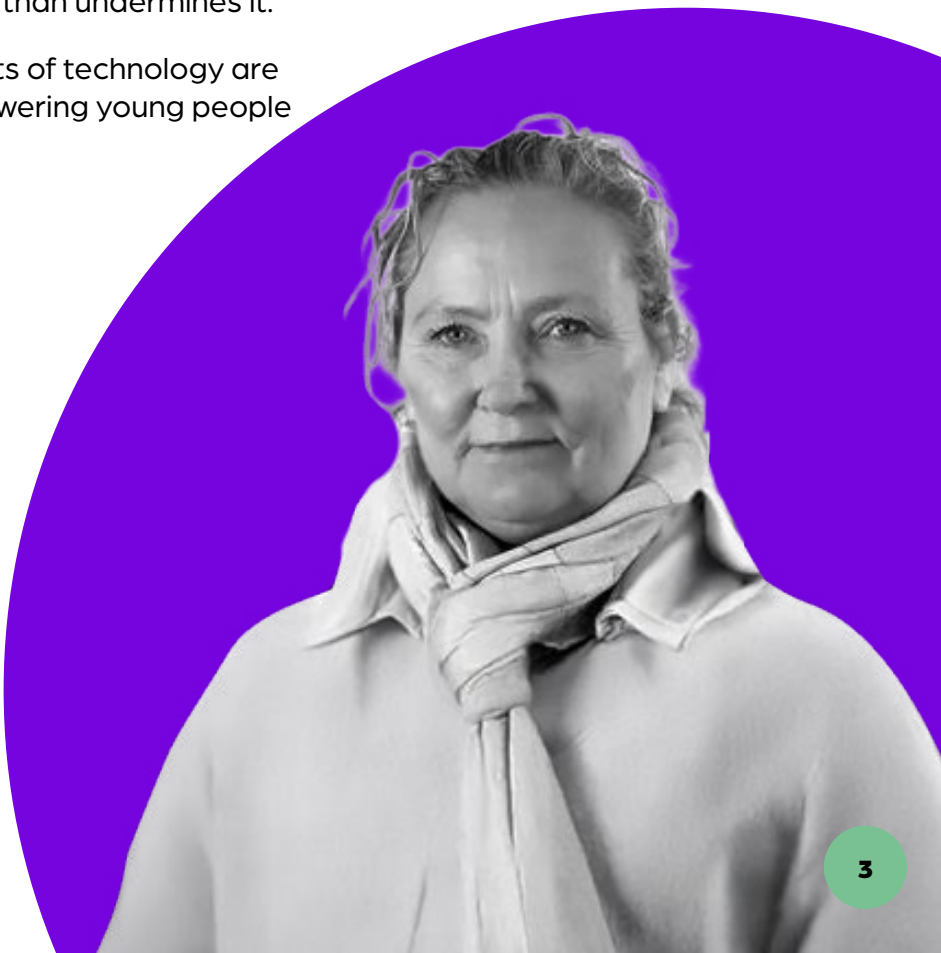
Introduction – By Dr Shade Agboola Director of Public Health, Warwickshire County Council

Social media is no longer just a way for children and young people to connect—it is influencing their health, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Since the 2018 Director of Public Health report EAT, SLEEP, SELFIE, REPEAT, the online landscape has changed significantly. Platforms such as TikTok have grown from near zero presence in 2018 to becoming one of the most dominant social media platforms, rivalling YouTube and Instagram in 2025.[1]

Alongside this, developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI), including image generation and Large Language Models (LLMs), and the increasing use of algorithms to target content, continue to evolve rapidly. These changes are here to stay.

– This year's report takes a different approach, presenting findings in a blog-style format to make the content engaging, accessible, and easy to share. The report has been shaped through collaboration with community safety partners, education professionals, and young people themselves, to better understand the challenges of "Growing up Online" in Warwickshire.

– Social media can offer opportunities for connection and learning, but it also brings risks that can impact physical and mental health. By working together to address these risks, we can ensure that technology supports wellbeing rather than undermines it. Our shared responsibility is to create environments—both online and offline—where every child and young person can thrive.

What we know about social media use

Smartphone/mobile phone usage and independent access increases with age, with most people using them by 16.

Use of mobile phone or tablet to go online: by age
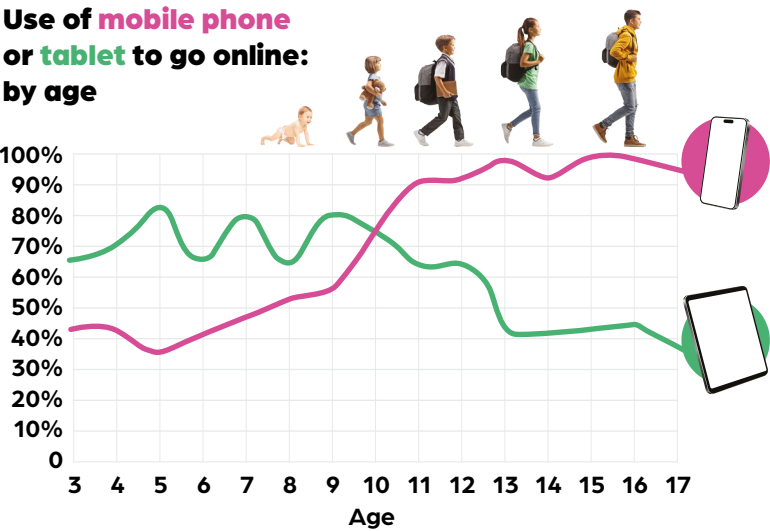
Figure 1: Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report OFCOM 2025[2]

Access is increasing at younger ages, with many under 13s accessing social media, despite most platforms restricting access to those under 13 years. In Warwickshire 1 in 3 children aged 13–14 years said they spend more than 4 hours per day on social media and gaming.

Top 5 apps/sites used across all categories: by age group

Figure 2: Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report OFCOM 2025[3]

As a child gets older, their intensity and engagement with social media apps increases from passive users to active users. Active use includes posting content and interacting with others online whereas passive use includes browsing and scrolling.[4]

Aged 8–11
19%
41%
38%

All aged 8–17
28%
44%
27%

Aged 12–15
31%
46%
23%

Aged 16–17
36%
44%
20%

● **Share, comment or post things**

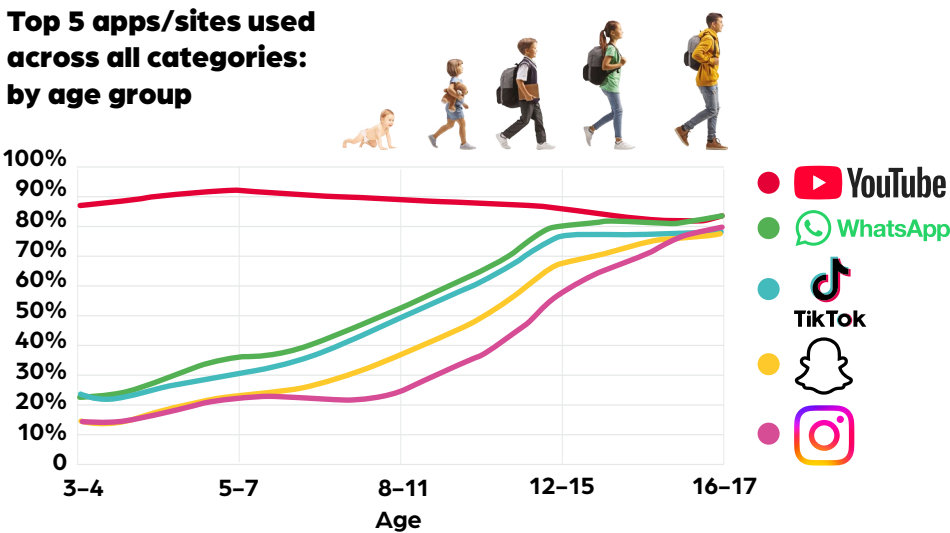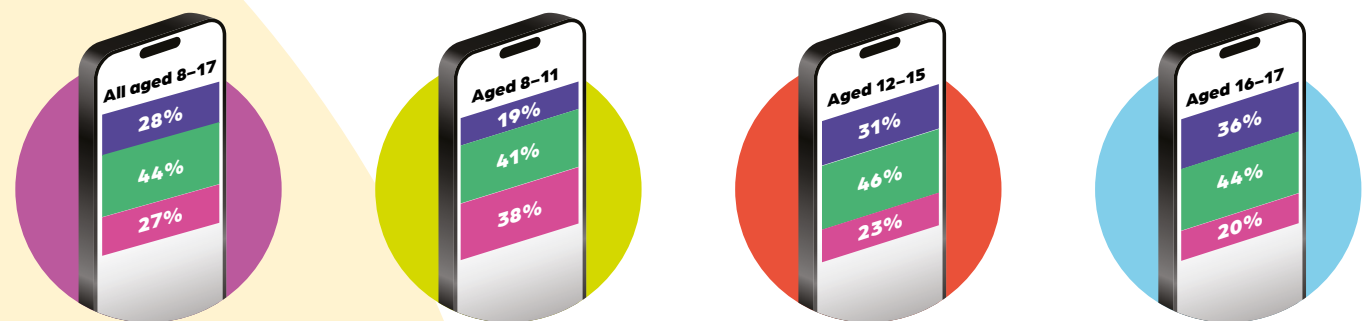● **'Like' things and follow accounts, but don't share,**

● **Only really read or watch things**

Figure 3– Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report OFCOM 2024[5]

We have found there are five main potential health impacts of social media. We explored:

• misinformation and how it is transmitted

• commercial determinants on social media– such as the price of devices, pay for subscription services, development of chat bots, image generation and advertising algorithms

• the impact of social media on loneliness and isolation

• the influence of social media on anxiety and depression

• physical impacts from wrist and neck injuries, changes to sleep patterns and eye health

Locally, young people have told us that they are using social media and often it is a positive influence on their life. They hold concerns that some content can be harmful and misleading. Misinformation, loneliness and isolation and the commercial determinants of health pose significant challenges to their health and well being.

Children and young people have the skills to take advantage of social media for making friends and sharing their lives with others. Although **53%** of young people in 2022 said online life positively impacted friendships, one in four still wished to reduce their screen time.[6] Something that may influence how social media impacts upon someone's life is how they engage with it: passive browsing is linked to worse wellbeing, while active, purposeful engagement can be more beneficial.[7]

Some tactics we can all use to limit usage include:

• App timers

• Take breaks

• Uninstall

• Unfollow

For misinformation specifically it is clear that we need to always promote:

• Talking face to face with others

• Seeking expert advice or using trusted sources

• Using critical thinking skills to think about motivation for anything you see online

Social Media and Young People's Wellbeing: Insights from the Inside

Social media is a big part of life for children and young people in Warwickshire. We know this from the Health Needs Assessment survey, which is conducted yearly across reception, year 6 and year 9 in Warwickshire state–maintained schools, that found **32%** of **year 9** children spent more than **4 hours** on social media per day. In this short blog, we discuss the survey findings using **4 years** of data covering 2020/21 up to 2023/24 and feedback from young people who attended an outreach session in August 2025.

A thoughtful and articulate group of young people of a range of ages took part in the outreach session and this conversation gives insight into the impact of social media on their generation.

Q1

We found looking at the results for Year 9 (age 13–14) children that 1 in 3 said they spend more than 4 hours per day on social media and gaming. What are your thoughts on this?

A

"This sounds about right, many spend more time, especially during holidays and weekends."

"We do spend that time on social media, but also with our friends in person too."

"It is a routine to spend every spare minute on my phone. When I first wake up, when travelling to my school, when having lunch, when returning home."

"Some of us are watching videos as part of education, so there should be a distinction with that. There is productive and unproductive use."

"Attention spans for children and young people are much worse than previously, there are shorter videos and multiple screen changes on TV shows."

Q2

We found that 1 in 10 children in year 9 (age 13–14) answered yes when asked if they regularly missed other activities because they wanted to use social media. What are your thoughts on this?

A

""I would rather do activities in person then spend time on social media/gaming."

"Chronic FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) can contribute to people missing other activities."

"We don't have access to third spaces for socialising outside of home and school."

"There are not enough activities on offer, and are difficult to find and access. This causes the increased social media and gaming use."

"Helicopter parenting, breeds higher social media use."

Q3

We did a statistical test to see if there was a relationship between the amount of time children said they spend on social media, and their reported happiness. We found that there was a correlation, which means that when the number of hours spent on social media (and gaming in 2023/24) increased, lower levels of happiness were reported. What are your thoughts on this?

To be clear, this is not evidence hours on social media directly cause unhappiness, rather it demonstrates that the higher the number of social media (and gaming) hours reported the more likely a child would be to have responded less favourably to the happiness question.

A

"Can't control what we see on social media. It can impact your happiness."

"It's hard to know if being on social media made me feel happy or unhappy. It depends whether you have friends or not."

"If someone is feeling low, it can be easy to build reliance on social media as it is an easy way to interact, not requiring the same face–to–face interactions."

"The more time we spend on phones the happier we are."

"I have seen content that made me feel worried."

"Social media doesn't always cause unhappiness but that people who were already unhappy would spend longer periods of time on social media."

Q4

Similar to the last question, we did a statistical test to see if there was a relationship between the amount of time children said they spend on social media, and the amount of physical activity they did. We found that there was a correlation, which means that when the number of hours spent on social media (and gaming in 2023/24) increased, the lower amount of time spent doing physical activity were reported. What are your thoughts on this?

To be clear, this is not evidence hours on social media directly cause less time spent doing physical activity, rather it demonstrates that the higher the number of social media (and gaming) hours reported the more likely a child would be to have responded with lower amounts of time spent doing physical activity.

A

"We need to balance physical activity and social media use."

"I use my phone while doing physical activity like trampolining or cycling."

"Exercise apps and YouTube videos can be useful."

"It is difficult to find a space to exercise without fear of being watched by others."

"Teenagers are often self–conscious or more conscious of what other people think of them and therefore not having these spaces where they feel safe makes them less likely to be physically active."

Q5

Again similar to the last question, we did a statistical test to see if there was a relationship between the amount of time children said they spend on social media, and whether children reported problems with falling asleep at bedtime. We found that there was a correlation, which means that when the number of hours spent on social media (and gaming in 2023/24) increased, the higher the number of children reporting they experienced problems falling asleep. What are your thoughts on this?

To be clear, this is not evidence hours on social media directly cause problems with falling asleep, rather it demonstrates that the higher the number of social media (and gaming) hours reported the more likely a child would be to have responded problems falling asleep.

A

"I took my phone to bed once and used it all night."

"Certain content does affect my sleep, like horror content."

"It is helpful to stop using your phone when it gets late and put it away."

"Notifications on my phone at night make me jumpy."

"I leave my phone on all night and respond to messages in the night."

"I sometimes use my phone to take pictures of myself to see if I look good while I sleep."

Q6

Again similar to the last question, we did a statistical test to see if there was a relationship between the amount of time children said they spend on social media, and how often children reported feeling worried. We found that there was a correlation, which means that when the number of hours spent on social media (and gaming in 2023/24) increased, the greater the number of children reporting they felt worried more often. What are your thoughts on this?

To be clear, this is not evidence hours on social media directly cause problems with levels of worry, rather it demonstrates that the higher the number of social media (and gaming) hours reported the more likely a child would be to have reported feeling worried more often.

A

"If you are already a worried person, using social media could make this worse, and worry more as you are fearful of how you are being perceived."

"If you have mental health issues you might be more likely to use social media and that could worsen issues."

"I'm aware information I post about myself online can potentially be used against me."

"The more aware you are of negative content, such as grooming, it could make you nervous."

Q7

Finally, we would like to ask if you are happy with the amount you use social media? If not, what do you think would help you and your friends?

A

"I'm not happy with the amount I use social media."

"I want to be on social media, I am happy using it."

"Education could help."

"There are parental controls however these can sometimes be got around."

"It is too late, the damage has been done, education early to prevent young people falling into unhealthy habits with gaming, social media and phones could help."

"I've deleted most of the apps and only use the bare minimum now."

"Adults are fearful of what children may get up to outside of the safety of home."

"Parents should decide how often young people spend on their phones."

*"Better education could resolve some of the high usage."*

"The unregulated nature of social media makes it addictive."

The views provided were thought provoking and insightful, showing a strong understanding of the issues of social media use.

Personal choices of our young people in Warwickshire are just one part of healthy social media use. Our young people are part of the much wider and powerful system of device provision, advertising, apps and the content available on these apps as well as access to those apps. Peer pressure, and the fear of missing out are also powerful influencers.

The views expressed also demonstrate the value of the laws and guidance in place to protect our young people and ensure they have an environment that enables them to stay healthy, both mentally and physically.

Our young people discussed alternatives to social media, access to "third spaces" and activities available to them to take part in. We all have a part to play to ensure we create a healthy environment that makes it easy for our young people to stay healthy.
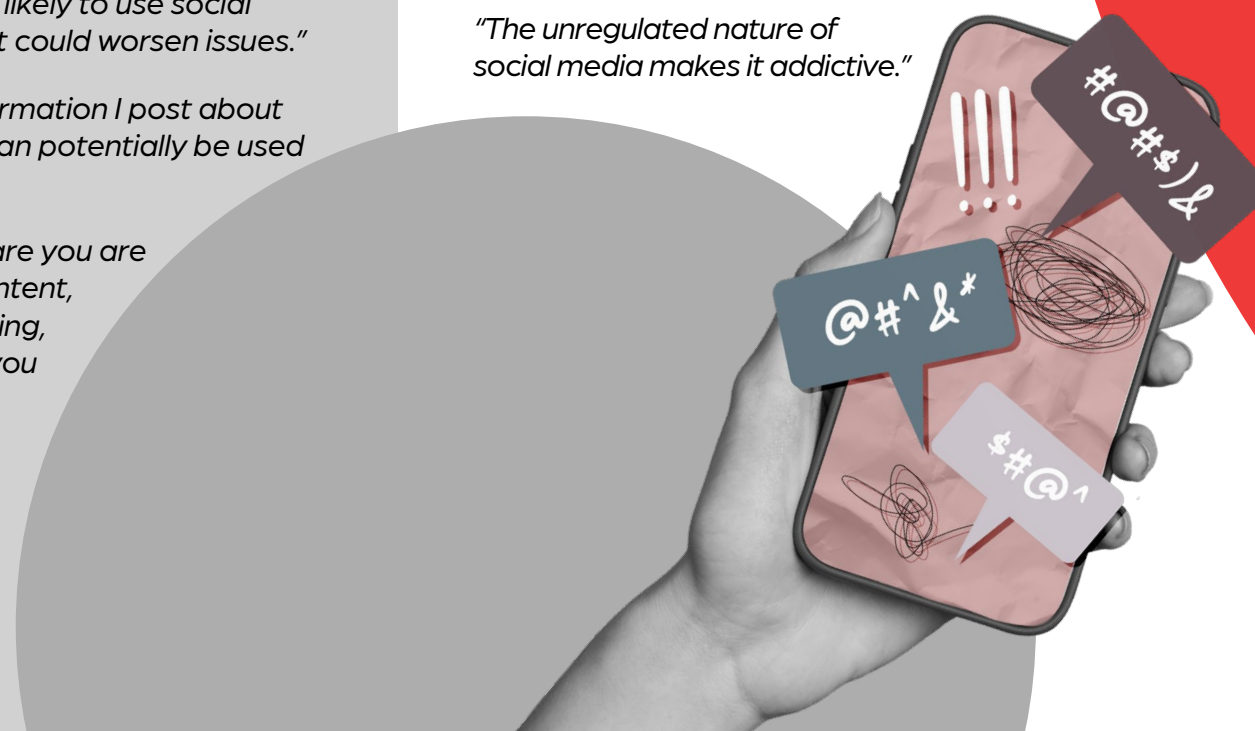
# Building a Safe Digital Environment: Strategies for Parents and Schools

Social media can feel like a scary place, and a lack of knowledge or confidence can lead to fears not only in young people but in their parents and carers too. In this short blog we will talk about some dangers of the online world such as online grooming and radicalisation, and some tips for making use of devices and apps safer for everyone. However first let's talk about how the negative aspects of social media can contribute to those dangers."

When social media is used correctly it is a wonderful tool for learning, staying connected with friends and family and being creative. However, used incorrectly social media can be a place full of negative experiences, causing cyberbullying, isolation, FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), exposure to inappropriate content and addictive behaviours. These factors can lead to self-image issues, anxiety and in some cases depression. Those negative experiences can lead some young people into impressionable situations such as being more vulnerable to online grooming and/or radicalisation. It is important to have open communication with your young people to help address those negative experiences and to help and support them through it.

Looking specifically at online grooming and radicalisation, firstly, what are they?

Online grooming is the use of social media or gaming platforms by groomers to develop a relationship with an individual. This can be done through a number of different apps, such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. Without appropriate security settings in place, groomers can gain an understanding of the young person's world before even making contact. Gaming, such as live chat options through multiplayer games (Xbox or Play Station for example), can allow groomers to make contact when added to a gaming 'party'.

Groomers' intentions can vary. In some cases the intentions can be sexual, such as soliciting explicit images, however that is not always the case. Groomers can use individuals for a number of different illegal activities including County Lines, drug dealing, theft or recruiting others.
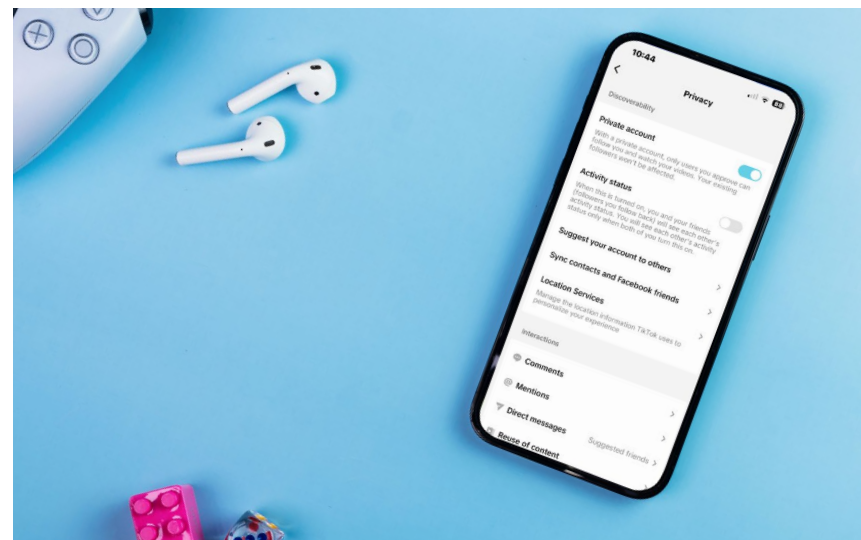
Radicalisation is the process through which someone develops extreme beliefs and ideologies. Those beliefs can lead to violence and extreme actions. With the use of the online world, these views may be projected across a number of platforms, potentially engaging even very young people. For example, the gaming platform Roblox is designed for people aged 7 and above and allows users to create their own games and worlds which anyone can join and play. Radicalisers can use such games to promote strong beliefs and imprint those on the young person, creating the risk that they will then go on to further platforms seeking extreme content and reinforcing extremist beliefs. Radical and extremist groups will groom young people through online avenues and may then look to involve them in initiation rituals where the individual will need to prove their loyalty to the group. This can be through recruiting others or violent and extreme acts which are then further shared on social media.

Here are some tips to help ensure your young persons' device/ social media app use is secure:

• Make their account private to everyone that is not an accepted friend, this is found in settings (usually displayed as a cog) and will have an option of Privacy Settings.

• For gaming, make sure none of their personal details are within their username.

• Add age-appropriate filters to certain apps, such as TikTok and YouTube. This is called Restricted Mode and is located in General settings.

• Never share images in school uniforms whether school logo is visible or not.

In a broader sense, always encourage young people to communicate openly with you regarding content seen online, and double check information they are seeing with a number of trusted sources. Managing security settings and, as far as possible, monitoring the apps and platforms young people are using should help reduce some of the risks involved in the online world. There is a wealth of further support information available and suggested sites include:
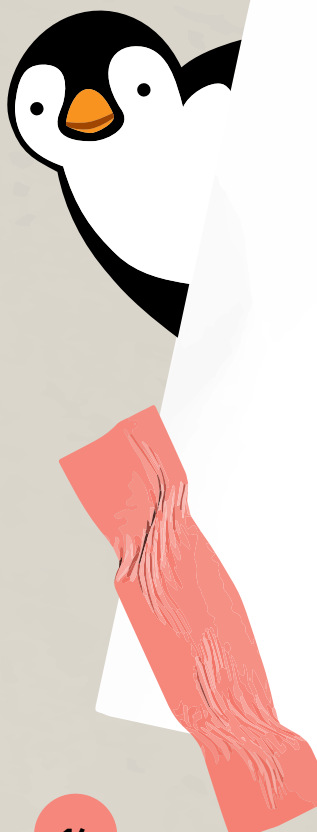
• safeinwarwickshire.com/crime-anti-social-behaviour/fraud-cyber-crime

• www.internetmatters.org/

• nationalcollege.com/

• www.nspcc.org.uk/

• www.warwickshire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/gr/grooming/

• www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/safeguarding-children/i-am-a-child-young-person/keeping-safe-online

Voices of the Future: The Safer Internet Penguin (SIP)

For Safer Internet Day February 2025 Warwickshire County Council's Community Safety team announced the winner of a Warwickshire primary school competition to find the best poem about staying safe online. Primary school pupils were invited to write a poem about staying safe online and being friendly and kind in all they do, with the theme of *'too good to be true?'*

The winner was a Year 6 student.

I am SIP, the Safer Internet Penguin,
I'm here to train your brain so the scammers don't win.
Remember to always think before you click,
Everything might not be what you think. It could be a trick.
When setting your passwords, keep them strong,
So that absolutely nothing ever goes wrong.
Privacy settings, they must always be on,
Or your information will be leaked and gone.
Think, what is posted is posted forever,
It can't be removed or deleted, never ever.
Cyberbullying is wrong, it's certainly not kind,
Be friendly to people and keep a healthy mind.
Protect the planet, protect yourself and always power off.
Never ignore the SIP rules and definitely do not scoff.

Safer Internet Day 2026 will take place on the 10th of February 2026, with celebrations and learning based around the theme *'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI'.*[8]

Voices of the Future: Tobias Lambe, age 21, Medical student on misinformation.

Here are some thoughts from a local medical student on misinformation with some advice on how to address it

Hormones...a word thrown around from teenagers to parents, doctors to teachers, but now a buzzword on social media too. So–called techniques and products to naturally reset or boost hormone production have flooded the internet, with the industry being valued at millions of pounds, but what is the truth? What is the evidence? Who do we trust?

Numerous health trends such as weight loss hacks, acne cures and hormones are present on many young peoples' 'for you' pages on social media, many of which will sell you a product to cure the perceived difficulties (these difficulties are often shaped by social media too – like the 'perfect' body or lifestyle shown everywhere, which just isn't achievable). This means we have created the perfect environment for businesses to take advantage of us."

Whilst influencers will tell you that your hormones are imbalanced and that's why you are tired, or that X% of people are misdiagnosed and there is this quick and easy fix (just click the link in my bio), there is one question we all should be asking – is this true?

The field of endocrinology (the study of hormones and glands) is a vast and complex one that simply cannot be covered today; in fact, a whole speciality of medicine is devoted to this, and doctors train for many years. There is no correct level of hormones, and they differ for everyone. They can be high or low, but this is something for a doctor to explore and treat if necessary. Hormones are complicated and do change with age, lifestyle, exercise, menstruation, and so many more factors; young people definitely shouldn't be expected to be experts.

For me, the difficulty arises when it's hard to know who to trust. How do I know what is real and what is made for likes/comments or to sell me a product? I don't have the time to read through research articles to become an expert every time, and I don't have the energy to endlessly scroll through reviews of products and try work out which were humans, and which were robots.

I want to share a few steps I take to help protect myself from misinformation:

1. Who is telling me this?

– Are they a qualified healthcare professional or a businessperson or is it just an influencer doing a brand deal?

– Are they who they say they are? (Anyone can pretend to be qualified online)

2. What are they trying to tell me?

– Making me aware of some common symptoms and saying I should check with a doctor is a good sign.

– If they are trying to make me think I am really ill and only they have the cure, maybe not the best sign.

3. How are they telling me?

– With scrolling quickly past all too common, they will get you with a hook: 'You won't believe what doctors aren't telling you', '5 years of medication but I fixed the problem in two weeks', or '100% of people got results with XYZ'.

– Any sort of emotional language or dealing with absolutes; remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

FAKE NEWS

4. Is it targeted at me and am I biased?

– Is it picking up on something I am insecure about, or is it blaming my poor sleep on my hormones and not the fact I stayed up scrolling last night? Am I looking for a quick fix for something else that needs addressing?

5. Quick fact check

– Often a quick Google will show a company with terrible reviews, a NHS website (reliable!) with a different perspective, or plenty of warnings. Occasionally, the product is actually legit and may help, but even then, is it a need and should I take it?

6. Ask the experts!

– Healthcare professionals are trained to read and critically analyse studies. They can explore symptoms and order tests. Hormone disorders are very real and can affect anyone, but often issues are either normal or not exactly what that viral trend told you.

Misinformation is everywhere and it's important to be able to tell fact from fiction, not only to protect your health but your bank account too! Products can be expensive and also unlicenced or untested, with no true evidence they work. Critically analysing these stories and checking beneath the surface of what is being said is vital.

Stopping the spread is everyone's responsibility. You can report content online as false information or a fraud/scam, you can make sure not to share posts you feel are false, and if you hear your friends or family talking about them, you should try and correct them too.

Voices of the Future: Loneliness and Isolation scenarios

Social media plays a significant role in the lives of young people, often shaping their emotional and mental wellbeing. While it offers opportunities for connection and creativity, it also contributes to feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Social isolation refers to feeling disconnected from others, even when online contact is available. Despite the prevalence of instant messaging and group chats, many young people report feeling more isolated than ever. This paradox is especially evident among **16–25–year–olds** in the UK, where **99%** use social media daily.[9]

Children and Young People were asked to fill out an activity sheet writing helpful and unhelpful reactions to some social media situations.

· Everyone posts from a meetup you weren't at.
· You post on a group chat and nobody replies.
· Your feed keeps showing 'perfect lives'.
· You come across a group chat or Instagram page that has lots of people in doing the same things you like to do.

The responses identified by the participants are as follows: ● Helpful   ● Unhelpful

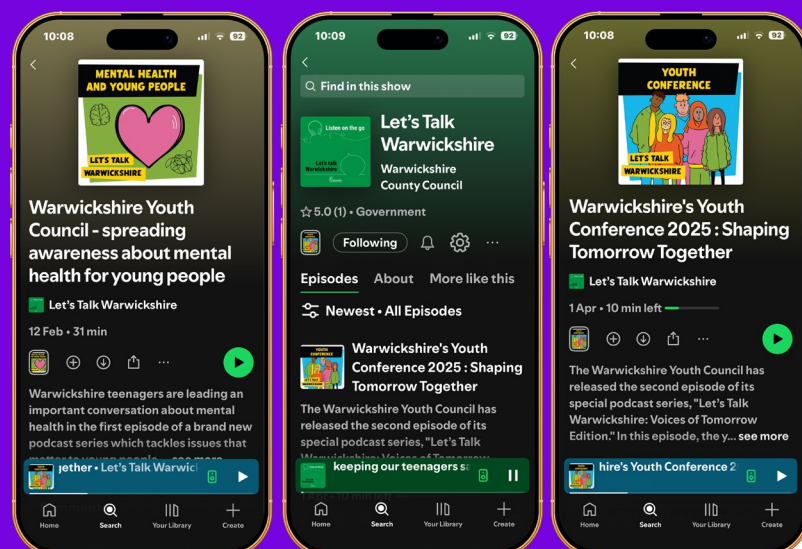| Everyone posts from a meetup you weren't at	· Confront them nicely · Be fine because you told them you didn't want to go · Asking if we can meet up · Ask to do it again another time	· Arguing · Getting physical · Not speak about your feelings · Ignore it
You post on a group chat and nobody replies	· Ask if everyone is okay · Ask your friend why no one responded · Go get some fresh air · Ask them if they can tell you if they liked it	· Explode · Just start a new conversation
Your feed keeps showing 'perfect lives'	· Go be with people you love · Go have a laugh · Go watch a movie · Don't stress and do what you do	· Getting aggro · Spamming negative comment · Believe them and change yourself

Voices of the Future: Warwickshire Podcasts for young people

Over the past 12 months the Council's "Let's Talk Warwickshire" podcast has released three episodes which cover the voice of our children and young people and their relationships with social media, mental health and of course the annual youth conference. The podcasts can be found here:

https://letstalkwarwickshire.podbean.com/e/warwickshire–youth–council–spreading–awareness–about–mental–health–for–young–people/

https://letstalkwarwickshire.podbean.com/e/warwickshire–public–health–keeping–our–teenagers–safe–and–well/

https://letstalkwarwickshire.podbean.com/e/warwickshires–youth–conference–2025–shaping–tomorrow–together/

Navigating the Digital World: Protecting Young Minds from Harm By Warwickshire's Director of Public Health Dr Shade Agboola

Social media culture and misinformation can influence young people to make decisions that negatively impact their health.
Tobias' article on hormone injections provides an important example of how misinformation can shape health choices and highlights practical steps we can all take to critically assess health information before acting.

Through writing this report and engaging with children and young people, three major health harms have emerged: misinformation, loneliness and isolation, and the commercial determinants of health.

Young people can be exposed to misinformation in many ways—through advertising by companies, peer influence, celebrity endorsements, influencer content, news articles presented as fact, and even by observing the habits and opinions of parents.[10]

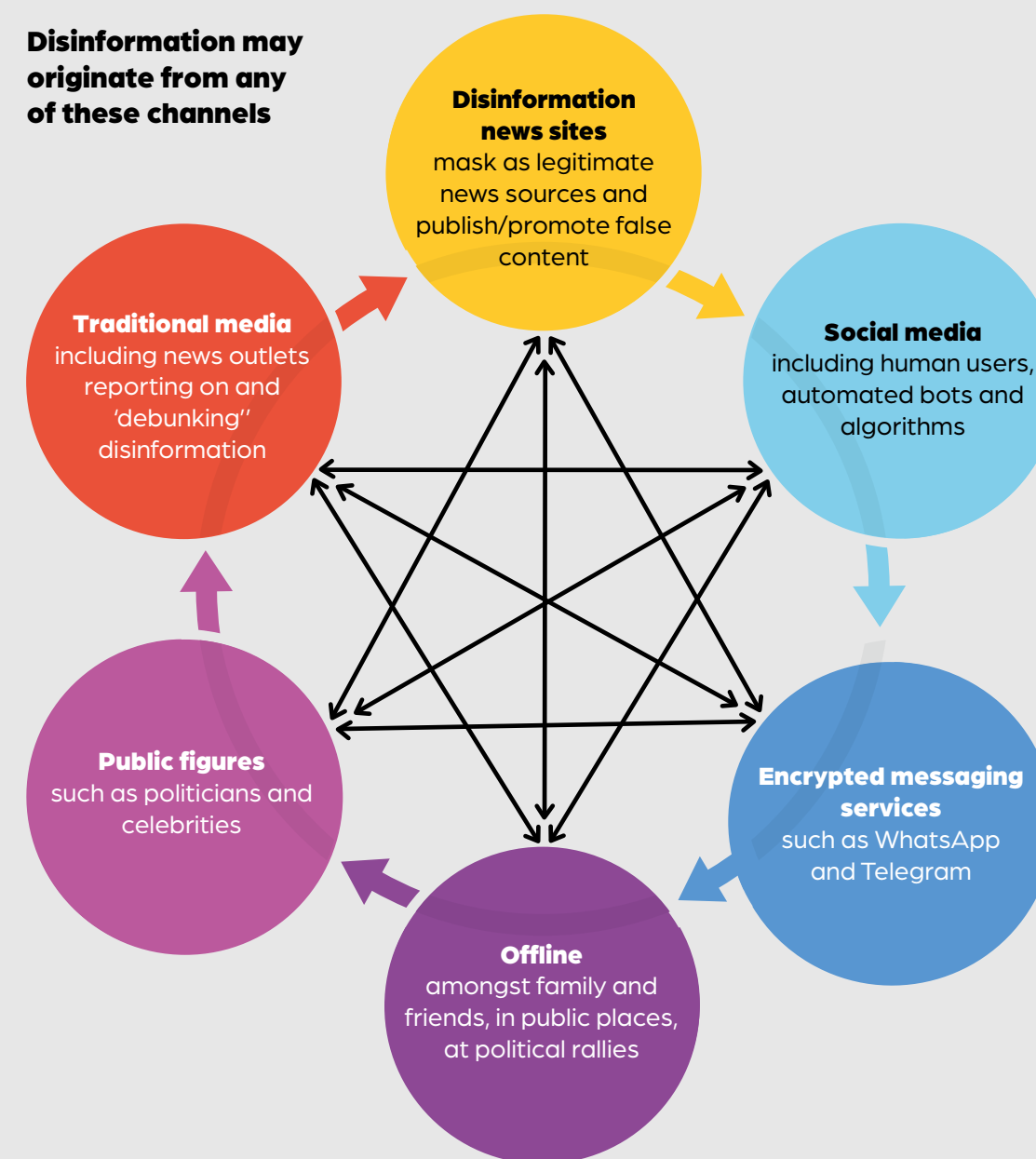**Disinformation may originate from any of these channels**

Figure 4: Examples of how mis/disinformation may spread. Adapted from First Draft News[11]

The commercial determinants of health are the way businesses and advertising influence what young people see online and how easy it is for them to avoid harmful content and this plays a big role in their health. Companies design platforms and marketing strategies to keep users engaged, which can make it harder for young people to step away from unhealthy or misleading content. Social media platforms often host groups that reinforce shared beliefs without challenge, creating echo chambers. Tactics such as "rage–baiting" and "engagement traps" make it harder for young people to avoid harmful topics.
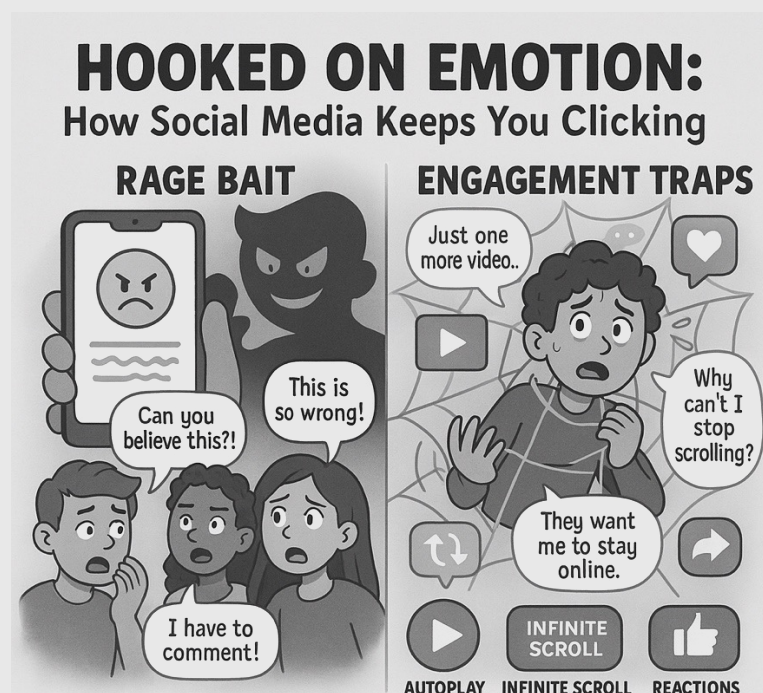
HOOKED ON EMOTION:
How Social Media Keeps You Clicking

Figure 5: AI generated summary of Rage Bait and Engagement traps– Chat GPT

What we know from the data

• Children aged **8–17** were less likely to believe information from social media compared to other sources: one-third **(32%)** believed most or all of what they saw on social media, compared to **66%** for news apps and **77%** for educational websites.[12]

• Just over two in ten older children were confident in their ability to judge what was fake or real but were unable to judge correctly in practice. About half were both confident and accurate in their judgments. Additionally, almost two in ten correctly identified fake posts despite initially lacking confidence in their ability to spot fake content online. Overall seven in ten **13–17–year–olds** accurately judged if posts were fake, the lack of confidence among some teenagers in this group might limit their ability to fully explore and benefit from online opportunities.[13]

• In a survey of **2,000** UK students aged **13–18** (August 2025), one-third **(32%)** said they cannot tell if AI–generated content is true, and nearly half **(48%)** wanted support from teachers to understand what content is trustworthy.[14]

• A third **(35%)** of children, some as young as **12**, report using "social media DIY" for mental health support. This rises to **47%** among young people with anxiety, eating disorders, or who self–harm.[15]

• Those with mental health difficulties are twice as likely **(32%)** to seek advice from influencers discussing mental health compared to those without such difficulties **(14%)**.[16]

Loneliness and isolation also influence health–seeking behaviour, with some high–risk groups turning to unmoderated online communities for support. Emerging technologies such as generative AI present new safeguarding challenges, including nudification tools and sexually explicit deepfakes.[17]

Warwickshire Director of Public Health Report 2024: The power of people and place...

It's been almost a year since my last report was launched and the messages from it are as relevant now as they were then.

The Power of People and Place: celebrating and inspiring community–based wellbeing focussed on the positive activity happening across Warwickshire to support community health and wellbeing. This shows that we have much to celebrate in Warwickshire with many incredible people, groups, and organisations delivering a wealth of services and activities — and highlights that people and communities are front and centre of building a healthy place to live.

The report, which was a mixed media video, has had around **770 views** and the feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive.

The report reminded us that improving health isn't just about services or clinical care. It's about the building blocks of health, such as the places we live in, the relationships we build, and the small, everyday actions that shape our collective health and wellbeing.

This message came through strongly from the engagement we did when writing the report, which identified a number of key themes, providing simple, yet impactful messages about what builds health in communities. These were summarised into six **'power of'** statements, as outlined opposite:

The Power of...

...Place: making the most of our built and natural assets.

**...Communities:** making a difference to people's lives.

...Relationships: connecting people and building trust.

...Partnership: working together to build partnerships and achieve common goals.

...Prevention: keeping people and communities healthy to reduce demand on our local health services.

...Possible: tackling the toughest challenges to drive change.

Over the past year, we have been working with colleagues and partners across Warwickshire to turn those "power of" statements into action, learning as we go, building momentum, and finding practical ways to make health and wellbeing everyone's business.
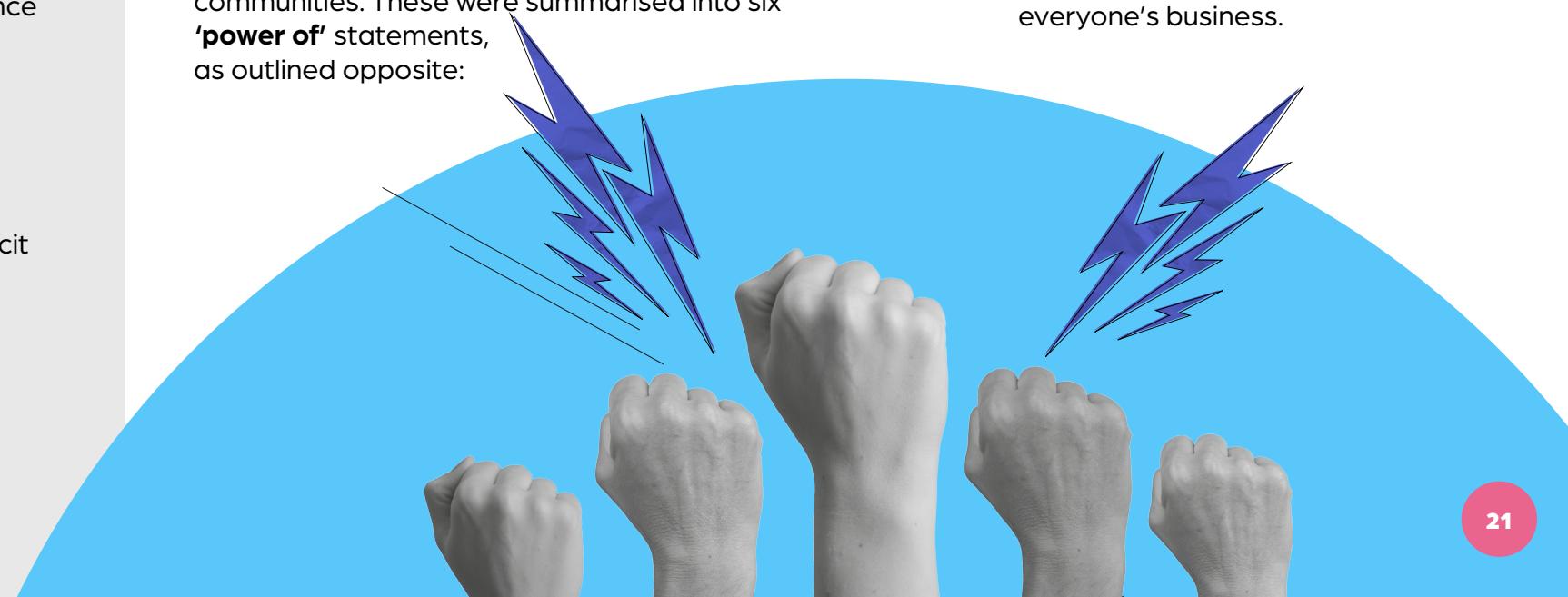
The Power of Place

The health and wellbeing benefits of our natural environment have been recognised in a green and blue spaces workshop, where different agencies shared examples of how they are actively working with communities to better connect people with nature. This might be by linking people to our collective network of greenspaces; or supporting residents to develop and lead their own local nature recovery schemes. We know there is more to do to raise awareness of these fantastic local resources, and we are committed to making this information more accessible.

This extends also to the spaces that offer places for people to meet and connect. Whether this is a library, school, community centre or place of worship — all offer the opportunity for social connection, activities and local service delivery. We continue to explore how these facilities can address loneliness and isolation as a key health and wellbeing indicator.

We all need to be proactive in our approach to setting out time to get out and about to enjoy these spaces as an important part of a healthy life at all ages.

The Power of Communities

Communities remain at the heart of everything we do and the report gave us the opportunity to illuminate some amazing examples of the community groups that are happening around Warwickshire. We know that the connections we make with our communities and neighbours through these groups have a significant impact on our wellbeing and health.

Supporting local communities wherever possible in the design and delivery of local services and activity helps move organisations from a position of 'doing to' to 'doing with' communities leading to more sustainable solutions for preventing ill health and improving wellbeing.
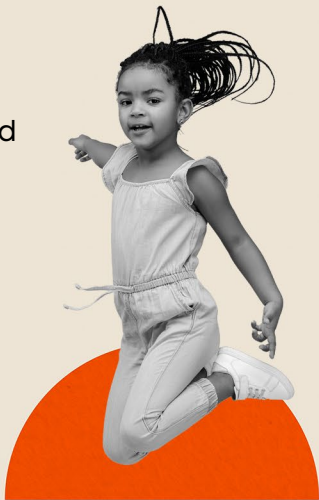
The Power of Relationships

The role of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE) as both a provider of services and a voice of local communities remains front and centre of our health and wellbeing agenda. Whether a large national organisation or a small grassroots group, the VCFSE provides a key mechanism for ensuring that local communities are able to actively participate in the planning, design and delivery of services and activity that support health and wellbeing.

This was highlighted through the Warwickshire Homelessness and Health Summit (June 2025), which bought together over 100 representatives from the local authorities, health and voluntary partners to reflect on what's working, where the gaps are, and how we can collectively improve access to health and care services for people experiencing homelessness.

The Power of Partnerships

None of this work to improve health and wellbeing happens in silos. Partnerships are what make it possible.

We have co-hosted workshops with colleagues from a range of different organisations across infrastructure, environment, and communities, exploring everything from green space access to healthy developments. These sessions have been great opportunities to learn from each other and build shared ownership around reducing inequalities, which we know can have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing.

We have worked with local planning teams to strengthen the way health is embedded in planning policy and local plans. It's been encouraging to see how these conversations have changed and we are now talking about designing for health from the start, not just adding it on at the end.

The Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach has continued to grow, helping colleagues across different services and organisations understand how their work connects to health and wellbeing, and importantly building the confidence to act on it. Each of these conversations re-emphasises that real change happens closest to people, in communities and not in isolation.

The more we work together, the clearer it becomes that 'partnership' isn't an outcome in itself, but it's the way we get things done.

The Power of Prevention

Prevention continues to be a shared focus across Warwickshire.

The Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health is a partnership commitment to promoting and supporting good mental health and wellbeing for all, for example by encouraging people to adopt the five ways to wellbeing into their daily lives.

The Power of the Possible

More than anything, this year has shown what is possible when people and places come together with shared purpose. Whether it's planners embedding health into design, or teams rethinking how prevention fits into everyday practice, there's a growing sense of momentum.

We can enjoy and maximise the benefits of a healthy approach, however we must at the same time be mindful of the challenges that we must tackle together in Warwickshire. That's what the Power of People and Place is all about. More than a report, it's a way of working that's shapes how we do things in Warwickshire.

Warwickshire Health Profile 2025

Shows the current health performance of the Warwickshire county and allows comparisons of performance between the districts and boroughs. The values are coloured to indicate statistical significance compared to England. This is the most recent compiled and published data as of 30/10/2025 .

Key: Better / Similar / Worse

Indicator	Unit	England	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire	Nuneaton & Bedworth	Rugby	Stratford-on-Avon	Warwick	Period
Hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (10 to 24 years)	per 100,000	266.6	304.0	363.0	423.0	185.0	295.0	227.0	2023/24
Pupil absence	%	7.1	7.6	8.8	8.1	7.2	7.0	7.2	2023/24
Average Attainment 8 score	Mean	45.9	47.0	41.7	43.1	46.9	51.4	49.7	2023/24
% of physically active children and young people	%	47.8	52.9	**	**	**	**	**	2023/24
Primary school pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs	%	3.6	3.9	**	**	**	**	**	2024/25
Secondary school pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs	%	4.3	3.9	**	**	**	**	**	2024/25
School pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs	%	4.0	4.1	**	**	**	**	**	2024/25
% of looked after children whose emotional wellbeing is a cause for concern	%	41.0	33.0	**	**	**	**	**	2023/24
Hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (10–14 yrs)	per 100,000	251.2	431.0	**	**	**	**	**	2022/23
Hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (15–19 yrs)	per 100,000	468.2	591.2	**	**	**	**	**	2022/23
Pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	%	19.6	19.9	**	**	**	**	**	2024/25
% of school aged pupils with Learning Difficulties	%	5.6	7.1	**	**	**	**	**	2017
Children in need due to socially unacceptable behaviour (<18)	per 10,000	6.9	6.2	**	**	**	**	**	2018
16–17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known	%	5.4	3.2	**	**	**	**	**	2023/24
Attended contacts with community and outpatient mental health services (<18 yrs)	per 100,000	28394.5	22282.4	**	**	**	**	**	2019/20
New referrals to secondary mental health services (<18 yrs)	per 100,000	6977.4	10168.4	**	**	**	**	**	2019/20
Inpatient stays in secondary mental health services (<18 yrs)	per 100,000	53.2	23.8	**	**	**	**	**	2019/20
Fixed period exclusion of school aged pupils due to persistent disruptive behaviour	per 100	1.4	0.6	**	**	**	**	**	2016/17
Primary school fixed period exclusions of pupils	per 100	1.4	1.5	**	**	**	**	**	2016/17
Secondary school fixed period exclusions of pupils	per 100	9.4	5.8	**	**	**	**	**	2016/17

* = Value suppressed for disclosure control

** = No data

*** = Value missing in source data

**** = Value not published for data quality reasons

Recommendations 2025/26

Recommendations for Parents

Recommendation 1 Recommendation that parents use the Cyber Safe Warwickshire checklist when setting children up with their first smart phone

Recommendation 2 Recommendation that parents of primary school aged children sign up to the parent pact to reduce exposure to social media at young ages

Recommendations for Education

Recommendation 3 Recommendation that the Council's Education Services and schools promote the opportunity for schools to participate in any training offered on evolving online harms via the School's Mental Health Network

Recommendation 4 Recommendation that the Council's Education Services promote the parent pact with parents of primary school aged children to increase the number of local sign-ups and reduce exposure to smart phones and social media for younger children

Recommendation 5 Recommendation that the Council's Education Services promote youth services in schools to link children and young people in to third spaces where they can experience face to face, and not only online, socialising

Recommendations for system partners in children and families

Recommendation 6 Recommendation that the Warwickshire Children's safeguarding board promote the Cyber Safe Warwickshire checklist for parents and the parent pact to primary aged children

Recommendation 7 Recommendation that community safety colleagues and public health collaborate to promote internet safety day on the 10th of February 2026. The theme will be 'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI' which will further explore the evolving impact of Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models (LLMs) on local children and young people.

Recommendation 8 Recommendation that all residents of Warwickshire and system partners consciously manage their own social media usage and model behaviours which promote healthy, active social engagement and managing personal usage of social media by:

• Using app timers

• Taking regular breaks

• Uninstalling software or unfollowing content which is detrimental to personal well being

This is especially important for parents of children aged 6–15 who will mimic parental behaviour online and offline, if they see it is positively reinforced, even if they think it's wrong.

Recommendation 9 Recommendation that all partners are aware of tactics to address health misinformation. When faced with health information online key questions to ask are:

• Who is telling me this?

• How are they telling me?

• Is it targeted at me and am I biased?

When in doubt individuals should seek to use trusted sources of information or expert advice to address specific queries

Additional resources

• Children and families – Warwickshire County Council

– Cyber security – Cyber safety – Warwickshire County Council

– Includes cyber safety courses and programmes – Cyber safety – Warwickshire County Council

• Social media and mental health: the good, the bad and the ugly | Action For Children

– Usage levels

– Relationships

– Cyberbullying

– Creative outlet and self-expression

– Unhealthy comparisons

– A tool for learning

– Excessive use

– Healthy use

• Cyber safety – Warwickshire County Council

– Age assurance

– Setting up devices safely

– Tackle online issues

– Choose age appropriate apps

– Tips to talk about online safety

• Internet Matters – Resources – Inclusive Digital Safety

– Advice for parents and carers: Guides

   Tacking online safety issues

   Where to go for help

   Resources that can help

   Insights and research

• Parents and carers | CEOP Education

– I'm worried about the way my child uses the internet – Online contact and staying safe

   Exposure to sexual content

   Online activity

   Sharing information online

• Social media guides – UK Safer Internet Centre

– Provides social media guides

• RSPH | #NewFilters to manage the impact of social media on young people's mental health and wellbeing

– This is the first national Inquiry specifically examining the impact of social media on the mental health and wellbeing of young people, which ran from April 2018 to January 2019.

• Social Media and Mental Health | Tips and Advice | YoungMinds

– How social media can affect your mental health

– Tips of positive time online

– Thinking about what you post and share

– Safety and privacy: looking after your digital footprint

– Dealing with cyber bullying

– Get help now

• Social media and its effects on children's mental health :: Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust – 11th April 2025

– The warning signs

– Starting the conversation

– Using social media as a positive force

• Misinformation games– pre–bunk' games to reduce susceptibility to disinformation by the University of Cambridge

– Bad News – Play the fake news game!

– Bad Vax– Level up your defences! Learn to build resistance against manipulation

References are available online: warwickshire.gov.uk/publichealthannualreport
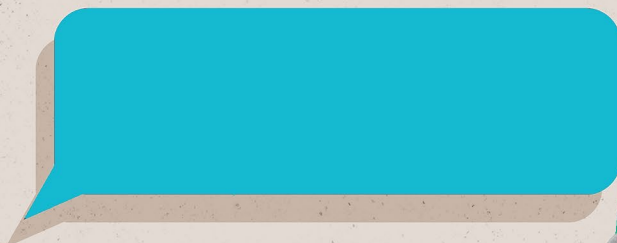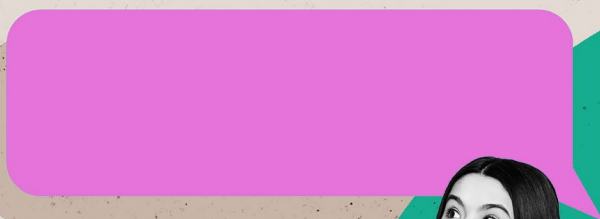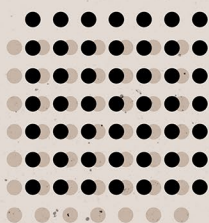
SETTING UP YOUR YOUNG PERSON'S FIRST PHONE

CHECKLIST

When you decide that the time is right to give your young person a phone, it can be a daunting time. Here is a checklist to help you get started and keep your young person safe.

☑ ## Talk about **expectations**

Before you give your young person a phone, you should talk to them about open communication with using the phone; where the phone will be kept at night; and whether it is allowed in the bedroom or kept elsewhere in the home. Encouraging your child to talk straight away about anything they see which is upsetting helps them to feel safer while online.

☑ ## Parental **controls**

Each phone will have its own settings installed within the device which will allow you to protect and monitor the use of apps, allow time limits and restrict inappropriate content.

☑ ## **Location** apps

Enable location activity. iPhones have the built-in capability of 'Find My'. This allows users who have iPhones to find one another and keep track of each other's locations. Androids, on the other hand, do not have the same built in ability so another app would need to be downloaded onto the devices.

☑ ## What apps are **allowed** on the device

Depending on the age of your young person, it is important to know what apps they are old enough to use. Most social media apps are 13+. Before allowing certain apps on the device, make sure you are aware of what each app is used for.

For further information visit **www.safeinwarwickshire.com**

safe in... warwickshire

CYBER SAFE WARWICKSHIRE

Warwickshire County Council