

# **Inquiry into the Impact of Cyberbullying on Social Media on Children and Young People's Mental Health – Summary of Survey Findings**

## **Context**

Alex Chalk MP, in partnership with YoungMinds and The Children's Society, has set up an [inquiry into the impact of bullying on social media on young people's mental health](#).

To inform the inquiry, YoungMinds and The Children's Society, have carried out a survey of children and young people aged 11-25 to hear about their views and experiences of bullying online.

In addition to the survey, the inquiry will consist of three evidence sessions in the Houses of Parliament. During the evidence sessions, a panel of MPs, Peers and other experts will hear from:

- children and young people who have been personally affected by online bullying
- industry experts on the impact of cyberbullying on mental health;
- representatives from social media companies.

The two charities, along with Alex Chalk MP, will be publishing the results of the inquiry in a report early in 2018.

## **The Survey**

The survey was hosted on SurveyGizmo between March and August 2017, and was completed by 1,089 young people aged 11-25:

- 62% of respondents were under the age of 18;
- Three-quarters of respondents were female (75%);
- Almost half of respondents (48%) said that they had experienced a mental health problem in the past.

## **Use of Social Media**

**Social Media platforms:**

- The most commonly used social media sites recorded in the survey responses were: YouTube (85%), Facebook (82%), Instagram (80%), Snapchat (75%) and WhatsApp (60%).
- Females were more likely to favour photograph-sharing platforms: 85% of female respondents reported using Instagram compared to 63% of males, and 80% of females use Snapchat compared to 59% of males.
- 51% of males reported using Xbox Live or other gaming sites, compared to just 8% of females.

- Under 18s were more likely to use Snapchat and online gaming sites than over 18s, whilst more over 18s reported using Facebook (93%).

## Age of first account:

- 59% of young people stated that they had their first accounts at age 12 or under, despite guidelines for social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram, all state you must be 13 years old to have an account.
- However, 73% of under 18s stated that they had their first account before the age of 13, suggesting that young people are increasingly using social media from a younger age.
- Only 9% of all respondents stated that they started using social media at age 15 or above.

## Time spent on social media:

- In total, 28% of the young people surveyed stated that they spend an average of more than four hours per day on social media, and 45% stated that they spend more than three hours per day on social media.
- Only 9% of survey respondents said that they spent an average of less than one hour per day on social media.

## When social media is used:

- The most common time of day that young people reported using social media was in the hours immediately after school, college and work, followed by later in the evening.
- 26% of those who use social media an average of more than three hours per day, stated that they always use social media during school, college or work hours.
- In total, 9% of young people stated that they always use social media between midnight and 6am, with 45% stating that they sometimes use social media during this time. These figures were similar for under 18s, with 8% stating that they always use social media overnight, and 42% sometimes using social media during this time.
- 14% of young people who use social media an average of at least three hours per day always use social media between midnight and 6am.

## What parents know about their children's social media usage:

- The majority of young people surveyed stated that their parents know what social media platforms they use (75%), how often they use them (62%) and how they use them (74%).
- In total, 42% of young people stated that they would tell their parents if something upset them on social media, however this reduced to 37% for those young people who used social media for more than three hours per day on average.

## Impact of social media:

- Overall, 62% of all respondents stated that social media had a positive relationship with their friends.
- Though more young people reported social media having a negative impact on their school, college or work life (27%), than a positive impact (22%).
- Similarly, significantly more young people reported social media having a negative impact on how they feel about themselves (38%), than a positive impact (24%). This was

exacerbated for girls, with 46% of female respondents stating that social media had a negative impact about how they feel about themselves.

## Differences in how young people interact online and offline:

- In total, 16% of young people surveyed stated that they always interact differently with others online than offline, whilst a further 61% stating that they sometimes interact differently on- and off-line.
- This was more remarked for those who stated that they spent an average of more than three hours on social media per day, with 20% stating that they always interacted differently on- and off-line.

## Cyberbullying

### Personal experience of cyberbullying:

- In total, 37% of young people reported having personal experience of online bullying in their lifetime, in contrast to 47% who reported experience of off-line bullying.
- 26% of young people reported personal experience of online bullying within the last year, in contrast to 25% who had experienced bullying off-line.
- Overall, 14% of young people reported personal experience of online bullying within the last month, in comparison with 13% who reported off-line bullying.
- A higher proportion of under-18s had experienced both on- and off-line bullying within the last month, and last year, than those aged 18-25. However, more young people aged aged-25 had experienced online bullying than those aged under-18.

### Peer experience of cyberbullying:

- In total, 42% of young people reported having seen somebody be harassed or bullied online.
- Whilst 39% of young people reported knowing that one of their friends had been harassed or bullied online in their lifetime, and 28% knew a friend who had been harassed or bullied online within the last year.

### Role of social media companies:

- An overwhelming majority of young people surveyed (83%) said that social media companies should do more to tackle cyberbullying on social media, whilst only 6% of young people disagreed with this.
- Similarly, 82% of respondents agreed that social media companies should do more to promote good mental health on their platforms, with less than 5% of respondents disagreeing with this.

\*\*\* A more in-depth survey analysis, including additional information about the views and experiences of young people relating to the impacts of cyberbullying on mental health, will be included within the inquiry report, to be published in early 2018.