

Aye Mind Toolkit

Your introductory guide to using digital technologies to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.



Aye Mind Toolkit

Aye Mind is here to inspire those who work with children and young people to confidently use digital technologies to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Being online and using social media is key to young people's lives. We know that this can create risks for youth mental health. But it can create opportunities too.

We don't believe in resisting technology or only focusing on the fear of what might happen to young people who use it. Instead, we believe that it's our responsibility to help young people develop the skills and perspective to navigate the digital aspects of their lives. After all, young people are using these technologies, whether we are supporting them or not.

We know, however, that digital is not something that we all automatically feel confident in. That's why this toolkit has been created. It supports anyone working with children and young people who want to understand what 'digital' is all about, but who might feel daunted by it, or unsure where to start.

In it, you'll get to read about the basics of digital technologies and how they relate to youth mental health. There are various chapters you can go through and we encourage you to read them in your own time and to go at your own pace. In each chapter, you'll find some supporting resources where you can read more about that particular topic.

By working your way through the toolkit, you'll develop the confidence to start your own digital journey. In doing so, you'll see all the opportunities that digital technologies give to enhance your practice, and how it can be yet another tool in your toolbox to support young people.



Toolkit

contents



1. Before you start

- 1 Getting it Right for Every Child
- 2 Children's rights
- 3 Disclosures
- 4 Creating a supportive environment
- 5 Checklist

2. Mental health

- 1 The basics
- 2 Spot the signs
- 3 Break down the stigma
- 4 Start the conversation
- 5 Look after yourself
- 6 Awareness-raising and training
- 7 A mental health improvement framework for children and young people
- 8 Reflective practice

3. Why digital?

- 1 Connected societies
- 2 Why youth mental health and digital?
- 3 People-first, technology second
- 4 Addressing unmet needs
- 5 Spotting online risks and how to respond
- 6 The way ahead

4. Online Lives

- 1 Is there such a thing as 'Digital Natives'?
- 2 What about you?
- 3 Keeping in touch
- 4 Meeting like-minded people
- 5 Giving and receiving support
- 6 Creativity and expression
- 7 Dating and intimate relationships
- 8 Gaming
- 9 Experimenting with identity
- 10 Campaigning and activism
- 11 Buying and selling

5. Digital Tools

- 1 What are digital tools?
- 2 Different purposes
- 3 Universal Tools: Guides
- 4 Universal Tools: Social media
- 5 Universal Tools: Gaming
- 6 Universal Tools: Wearables
- 7 Navigating Mental Health Tools
- 8 Keeping a critical mind
- 9 How to evaluate digital tools?

6. Risks and Vulnerabilities

- 1 Understanding risks
- 2 Highlights reel and social comparison
- 3 Sleep and attention
- 4 Sexting
- 5 Revenge porn
- 6 Gossip and online bullying
- 7 Privacy and digital footprints
- 8 Gambling
- 9 Access to inappropriate content

7. Digital Citizenship

- 1 The educational context
- 2 Formal and informal learning
- 3 Understanding digital literacy
- 4 5Rights: Digital rights
- 5 Digital inclusion

8. Conclusion: Starting your journey

- 1 Find a partner
- 2 Self-reflect
- 3 Do your research
- 4 What are your organisation's requirements?
- 5 Start a conversation with young people
- 6 Connect with the experts
- 7 Try out social media
- 8 Try using digital tools

9. Get in touch with us

10. References



aye mind



1. Before you start

Before you begin, it's important that you consider a range of issues when working with the toolkit. We'll be covering some of these core issues off in this initial section.

All statutory agencies and youth organisations will have policies and procedures in place as part of their mandatory practice. However, it's also a duty for staff to be fully versed in these and keep up to date with any changes.

In this section, you'll find information on:

1. Getting it Right for Every Child
2. Children's rights
3. Disclosures
4. Creating a supportive environment
5. Checklist

1. Getting it Right for Every Child

Underpinning the work of Aye Mind are the 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) principles where the young person is at the centre of everything we do. The principles call for children and young people to be supported to grow, develop and reach their full potential.

GIRFEC means you:

- Put the child or young person at the centre of your work, understanding what their unique needs are and how you can help;
- Use common tools, language, and processes to consider a child or young person's wellbeing, working closely with them, their family, and other professionals supporting them where appropriate;
- Feel confident that you have the right information to provide the best support you can to a child or young person and their family.

GIRFEC doesn't change or overrule current child protection procedures. Child protection services should be contacted immediately if a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm.

Want to read more?

1 Scottish Government. Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/> (Accessed: November 2022)

2. Children's rights

This toolkit adopts a perspective firmly grounded in child rights and child protection. Every child and young person has rights, no matter who they are or where they live. Nearly every government in the world has promised to protect, respect, and fulfil these rights. Children's rights are enshrined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#), an international statement on the rights of children.

The UNCRC has also adopted the [General comment 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment](#). This means that the rights of children apply online, just as they do offline. It reaffirms the core principles that also need to be considered in online environments, including non-discrimination, best interest of the child, and their rights to life, survival and development, respect for children's views and evolving capacities.

Want to read more?

1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)

2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – General comment 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3906061> (Accessed: November 2022)

3. Disclosures

The duty of confidentiality owed to a young person in any setting is the same as that owed to any other person. Young people have a similar right to confidentiality as adults, however, this duty is not absolute.

Where there is a serious child protection risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a young person or others this outweighs the young person's right to privacy. In these circumstances, professionals should act in accordance with the guidance of the organisations' Child Protection procedures. Sharing information is essential if children are to be protected. Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children safe from harm requires professionals and others to share information. Such information sharing must be in accordance with legal requirements and professional guidance.

Young people should be made aware that confidentiality may be breached if they, or another young person, are at risk. In these circumstances, staff should consult the young person and endeavour to gain their co-operation to share this disclosure. If that's not possible, they should be advised that their confidentiality will be breached. Staff should always advise the young person that there are situations where confidentiality may not be possible – e.g. young people need to know that information may have to be shared for their own safety and protection.

“Every child and young person has rights, no matter who they are or where they live.”

My World Traingle:

Young person's physical, social, educational, spiritual and psychological development



4. Creating a supportive environment

Having a supportive environment often provides opportunities for feelings and experiences to be shared. Care must be taken to make sure:

- Safe boundaries exist;
- Children and young people don't feel exposed;
- Views and opinions can be explored without becoming personal.

There should always be an adult who can talk with the child or young person to find more support if needed.

Young people's workers must always consider the response if personal experiences are shared. Clear safety protocols must be in place about how that information is used – taking account of and following organisational and statutory child protection guidelines.

It's with this in mind that when using the toolkit, staff are appropriately trained and can provide accurate and up-to-date information and guidance on the issues affecting young people's lives.



5. Checklist

Below is a useful checklist to determine whether appropriate safety measures are in place before undertaking any work around digital youth mental health:



A stylized illustration of a clipboard with a silver clip at the top. The clipboard is dark blue and holds a white sheet of paper. On the paper is a checklist with seven items, each preceded by a small square checkbox. A hand with a green sleeve is holding a yellow pencil, pointing at the sixth item on the list. The background is a solid teal color.

- ☐ Are staff PVG checked?
- ☐ Are staff appropriately trained to support young people in the area of mental health? For example, Scottish Mental Health First Aid or similar.
- ☐ Is there an appropriate 'keep safe' message for young people in place before, during, and after sessions?
- ☐ Are staff aware of and appraised of the organisations child protection policies and procedures?
- ☐ Are staff aware of data protection legislation and how it relates to their role?
- ☐ Do staff have knowledge or have access to information about appropriate support services if required?
- ☐ Are staff suitably supported when difficult situations arise?





2. Mental Health

We know that mental health is a growing concern for young people, with around half of mental health problems being developed by age 14. It's therefore important that those working with young people have a basic level of awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing in order to best support young people and to build a trusted relationship with them. This section will provide you with an introduction to mental health in the context of young people.

In this section, you'll find:

1. The basics
2. Spot the signs
3. Break down the stigma
4. Start the conversation
5. Look after yourself
6. Awareness raising and training
7. A mental health improvement framework for children and young people
8. Reflective practice

1. The basics

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health. Our minds can become unwell just like our bodies can become unwell. Yet we are more likely to talk about our physical health than we are about our mental health.

Mental health problems are actually more common than you think. Mental illness affects 1 in 4 of us in any year. Around the world, it's estimated that 1 in 7 of 10-19 year olds experience mental health problems (World Health Organisation, 2021). The effects are as real as a broken leg or broken arm, even though there isn't a sling or plaster cast to show for it.

Adolescence is a crucial period for support, because 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24 (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.). According to the Samaritans, 1 in 6 of 16-24 year olds have said they have self-harmed at some point in their lives, with rates being higher among girls than boys (Samaritans, 2020). Surveys show around 13% of boys and 10% of girls aged 11-15 have mental health problems (Mental Health Foundation, 2016). The most common problems for boys are conduct problems. For girls, they are emotional difficulties.

“Adolescence and young adulthood is a key developmental period in anyone’s life. Failing to recognise and respond to mental health issues experienced by young people can blight their whole lives.”

Want to read more?

1 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 2022. Mental Health Resources for Schools and Organisations. Available at: <https://www.nhsggc.scot/downloads/mental-health-resources-for-schools-and-organisations/> (Accessed: November 2022)



2. Spot the signs

Perhaps you're worried about a young person's mental health. How do you know if their behaviour is an illness, or something caused by difficult events in their life? Things happen that can make us vulnerable. Bereavement, friendship or family breakups, bullying or stress such as exams can lead to distress. When this distress doesn't settle after a while, it can turn into mental health problems.

Take the time to observe the young person's behaviour and look out for the following signs:

- Have they become more withdrawn than usual? Are they avoiding social contact and refusing invitations?
- Have you noticed them crying? Puffy cheeks and red eyes can hint they've been crying in private.
- Has their performance at school or work gone downhill lately?
- Have you noticed significant changes in their eating habits? i.e. eating a lot or little.
- Are they looking dishevelled or like they haven't taken care of themselves for a while?
- Do they seem lethargic, like they're not quite there?
- Have you noticed a change in how they speak? i.e. rapidly, incoherently, or slowly.
- Do they seem to be spending extravagant amounts of money?

Remember that every mental health problem has its own signs and symptoms. If you have a feeling something isn't quite right with someone you know well, then chances are it's not.

3. Break down the stigma

People are becoming more comfortable talking about health, but what about their mental health? Things are getting better but unfortunately there is still a stigma surrounding mental health. It prevents many people from talking about their worries and getting the help they need.

A survey from See Me found that only 26% of young people said they would tell someone if they were finding it difficult to cope with their mental health. Their fear of being judged, dismissed and not taken seriously makes it difficult for them to tell anyone how they feel (See Me, n.d.).

Young people with experience of mental health problems say that talking to others is the most important thing in their recovery. Sharing how they felt helps them to realise they aren't alone.

The more we talk about mental health, the more it becomes the 'norm'. In doing so, we can help break down the stigma and discrimination. If you're worried about your mental health, or someone you care about, help is available.

In Scotland, the [See Me programme](#) helps mobilise people to take action against mental health stigma and discrimination, including a focus on young people and you can join forces with their movement for change. They have lots of good resources if you need some hints and tips on how to create an open, supportive culture around mental health.

"Listen to those instincts. They could be the only reason that person gets the help they need."

4. Start the conversation

Mental health problems affect almost every family. Yet as a nation, we struggle to have an open conversation about it. Misconceptions, fears of social consequences, discomfort and discrimination all tend to keep people silent. Meanwhile, if they get help, most people recover and lead happy and productive lives.

You don't need to be an expert to talk about mental health. It's often the little things you do and say that make a difference. Ask 'How are you?' and mean it.

While you may not ever know how they feel inside, you can help by inviting them to talk about how they feel. Often people want to talk, but wait until someone asks how they are. Even if they're not ready to open up, it still shows that someone is there to listen.



The Samaritans have some helpful 'SHUSH' tips on starting a conversation and becoming a better listener:

S – Show you care

Focus on the other person, make eye contact, put away your phone, and don't try to "fix" everything.

H – Have patience

It may take time and several attempts before a person is ready to open up.

U – Use open questions

Use questions that need more than a yes/no answer. For example "What happened? Tell me about..? How do you feel about...?"

S – Say it back

Repeat back what they said to show you understand and ask more questions.

H – Have courage

Don't be put off by a negative response and don't feel like you have to fill a silence.

Want to read more?

1 Samaritans, n.d. DEAL – Developing Listening Skills. Available at: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/deal/deal-resources/connecting-others/listening-skills/> (Accessed: November 2022)

5. Look after yourself

As youth workers, teachers, social workers and clinicians, we make time for everyone. We often don't make enough time for ourselves. It is important that you look after yourself. Self-care is about creating and maintaining practices that help you sustain your wellbeing.

It makes you a better youth worker, teacher, mentor, friend, community member, and caregiver. Giving to others but neglecting yourself can lead to feelings of resentment. Taking good care of yourself allows you to enjoy time with others in the long run.

Self-care is not selfish. Take time to reflect, nurture your body, remember your heart, grieve your sorrows, and attend to your needs.

Want to read more?

- 1 The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, 2007. Transforming Compassion Fatigue into Compassion Satisfaction: Top 12 Self-Care Tips for Helpers. Available at: <http://www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/Top12SelfCareTips.pdf> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 VeryWell Mind, 2022. 5 Self-Care Practices for Every Area of Your Life. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/self-care-strategies-overall-stress-reduction-3144729> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 Psychology Today, 2014. Seven Types of Self-Care Activities for Coping with Stress. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ie/blog/shyness-is-nice/201403/seven-types-self-care-activities-coping-stress> (Accessed: November 2022)

6. Awareness-raising and training

There are a wide range of learning opportunities and training to support a young person's mental health. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Mental Health Improvement team have published an [Online Learning Opportunities document](#), which covers a range of available mental health learning opportunities across the life course, including among children and young people. This includes resources like [MindEd](#), a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health which provides a wide range of e-learning modules.

E-learning modules are a good starting point but don't replace face-to-face learning. Some formal training you might want to consider include:

- Scottish Mental Health First Aid
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Self-harm Training

Want to read more?

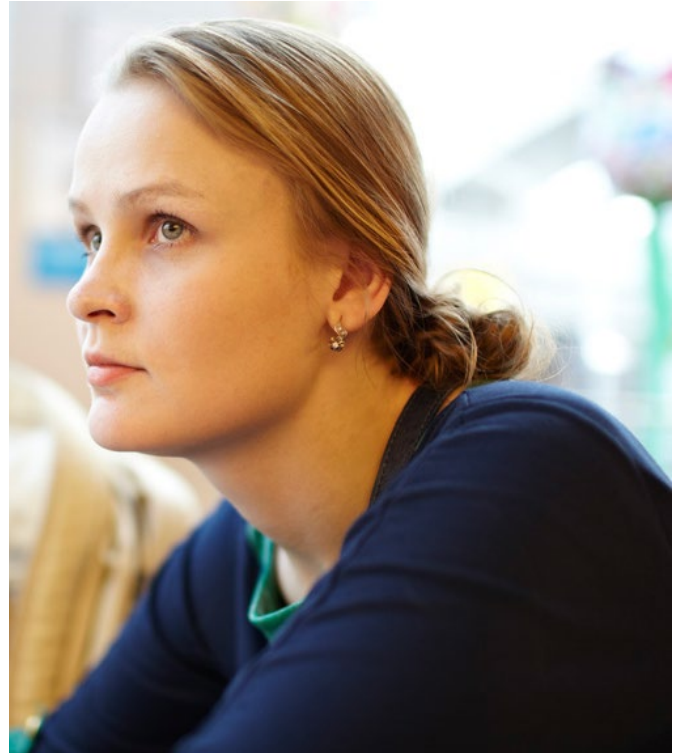
- 1 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 2022. Mental Health Online Learning Opportunities. Available at: <https://www.nhsggc.scot/downloads/online-learning-resources-update-mental-health/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 2022. Self-Harm Resources and Supports. Available at: <https://www.nhsggc.scot/downloads/self-harm-resources-and-supports/> (Accessed: November 2022)

7. A mental health improvement framework for children and young people

In Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the Mental Health Improvement team have developed a '[Mental Health Improvement and Early Intervention Framework for Children and Young People](#)'. This is an evidence-based framework outlining 6 key principles that support young people's mental health, as outlined in the table below.

Want to read more?

1 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 2022. Mental Health Improvement and Early Intervention Framework for Children and Young People. Available at: <https://www.nhsggc.scot/downloads/mental-health-improvement-and-early-intervention-framework-for-children-and-young-people/> (Accessed: November 2022)



Mental Health Improvement and Early Intervention Framework For Children & Young People

6 Key Principles

Resilience in communities	One good adult	Resilience in schools
A strong network of youth services, building achievements and skills to support and intervene.	A dependable adult to support and protect mental health > Attachment (parenting). > Mentoring (guidance, befriending).	Whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing – a nurturing environment that builds emotional literacy.
Peer help and social media	Guiding through the service maze	Distress, self-harm and suicide prevention
Build opportunities for peer help and positive use of social media - given that young people often turn to peers and the internet for help.	Children, families and young people have a range of support options for early intervention and can be helped to find their way to appropriate help quickly.	Frontline staff are confident and supported to intervene and help young people in situations of distress.

The strategy is underpinned by tackling poverty, disadvantage & inequalities as well as having GIRFEC core values and principles at the heart of it.

8. Reflective Practice

Preparing a short reflection after each learning activity is a good habit. It is a way of studying your own experiences to improve the way you work. Reflection helps you become a more confident, proactive and qualified professional. You become more aware of your style of working and how you approach supporting a young person. It helps close the gap between theory and practice.

You can use various models to 'kick start' the habit of reflective practice. For example, Gibbs' reflective cycle is a process involving six steps:

- 1 Description – What happened?
- 2 Feelings – What did you think and feel about it?
- 3 Evaluation – What were the positives and negatives?

- 4 Analysis – What sense can you make of it?
- 5 Conclusion – What else could you have done?
- 6 Action Plan – What will you do next time?

We'd encourage you to try reflective practice as you go on your digital journey. Below is a reflective practice form that you can complete.

Want to read more?

1 MindTools, n.d. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. Available at: <https://www.mindtools.com/ano9qiu/gibbs-reflective-cycle> (Accessed: November 2022)

Reflection

What happened?	What else could you have done?	What do you think and feel about it?
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
What sense can you make of it?	What will you do next time?	What were the positives and negatives?
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>



3. Why digital?

We know that while digital is second nature to some people, that this isn't the case for everyone. This section makes the case for why you might want to consider using digital technologies if you support young people. It will also get you thinking about how you can start your digital journey.

In it, you'll find information about:

1. Connected societies
2. Why youth mental health and digital?
3. People-first, technology second
4. Addressing unmet needs
5. Spotting online risks and how to respond
6. The way ahead

1. Connected societies

Out of 7.91 billion global population, there are:

- 4.95 billion active internet users;
- 5.31 billion unique mobile phone users;
- 4.62 billion active social media users (DataReportal, 2022)

In 2021, nearly all children in the UK went online (99%), and the majority used a mobile phone (72%) or tablet (69%) to do so (Ofcom, 2022). This phenomenal rise of the internet and mobile communications is having a huge impact on many areas of modern life – from shopping, socialising, and travel to learning, help-seeking, and participation.

Digital communication technology is now fully integral to young people's lives. It's at the heart of contemporary culture.

It's clear therefore that we can't ignore digital. For many young people, it's a seamless part of the world we live in. There isn't a digital world – just a world with online and offline elements. If we live with and/or work with young people, we have a duty to understand, as best we can, the digital dimension of our world.

And if you feel daunted, it's important to remember that most people who 'get' the role of digital in mental health aren't computer experts or 'whiz' kids. They have built this understanding through study, practice, or by listening to young people themselves.

2. Why youth mental health and digital?

Why should those who work with young people take the digital world seriously?

Plugging technology into mental health systems and services is a “no-brainer” for young people, given the degree to which technology is integrated into so many aspects of their lives.

At Aye Mind, our view is that anyone who seeks to support young people’s wellbeing needs to engage with the ‘digital world’. It should be an essential development area, not an optional extra. We see the case for digital engagement as overwhelming, with the only question being “how to” rather than “whether to”.

Why?

- It’s no longer possible to support young people’s wellbeing without considering the impact of the internet and social media;
- There’s also growing evidence of the positive benefits of digital tools in promoting wellbeing (Young and Well CRC, 2014; Wies, 2021);
- And further, the online risks and downsides don’t go away if youth professionals don’t engage to help young people address them.

So, is it all about sorting out young people’s mental health problems with smartphone apps? Not at all! While recommending and using mental health apps is a part of the response, the landscape is much broader than this, as the rest of the toolkit will cover.

3. People-first, technology second

Digital resources have a significant role to play as part of a wider approach in promoting and supporting young people’s mental health. We don’t see digital approaches replacing the need for face-to-face support but as a complement. The Scottish Government also recognises that the health and wellbeing of people across Scotland can and should be enhanced and transformed through the use of digital technology in their [Digital Health and Social Care Strategy \(Scottish Government, 2021\)](#)

To meet the needs of young people, they should be involved as co-designers of innovative solutions. This means taking a co-production approach to developing technologies for mental health. We have adopted such an approach in the development of all our work at [Aye Mind](#).

Want to read more?

- 1 Scottish Co-production Network, n.d. Available at: <https://www.coproductionsotland.org.uk/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 The Scottish Government, 2021. Digital Health and Social Care Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-digital-health-care-strategy/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 World Health Organisation, 2020. Digital Health Interventions Framework for Planning, Developing and Implementing Solutions with and for Young People. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336223/9789240011717-eng.pdf> (Accessed: November 2022)

4. Addressing unmet needs

One of the most compelling reasons for all who work with young people to embrace innovation in mental health is the scale of the unmet need. Evidence shows that young people aged 12-25 have the highest rate of mental illness across the lifespan. Despite this, they also have the worst access to mental health services.

Similarly, research shows that support which decreases the duration of teenage mental health problems have a real chance of preventing morbidity in later life.

As part of the response to this major need, growing experience around the world shows the significant potential for using online technologies for young people's mental wellbeing.

We'll explore this in the following sections of the toolkit but as a start, the potential of digital technology for youth mental health includes:

- Protecting against developing a mental health disorder
- Getting help quickly (including peer support) and appropriately using the right channels, due to the fact websites and apps are always available
- Overcoming physical barriers; if someone is disabled or lives somewhere remote then accessing face-to-face services can be challenging
- Overcoming stigma; people might feel more comfortable talking to someone from home, and getting help online can feel more discreet and confidential
- Accessing help, advice and interventions during a critical period.

"A major factor contributing to this poor access is the current design of our mental healthcare system which is manifestly inadequate for the unique developmental and cultural needs of our young people"

(McGorry, 2013)



5. Spotting online risks and how to respond

There are a wide range of views and experiences among professionals about the benefits and risks of using online technologies to promote youth wellbeing. We believe that planned and skilful use of technologies can bring real benefits. We just need to be aware of, and carefully address, the main risks and obstacles. This includes:

- Difficulty in finding the relevant information or support
- Digital exclusion and literacy challenges for some young people
- Finding inaccurate or potentially damaging information
- Online bullying or abuse
- Privacy and confidentiality concerns of potentially sensitive information
- Excessive, obsessive or inappropriate use of technology.

In general, those who work with young people need to address such concerns within their overall approach. Practical steps to consider include:

- Ensure effective practice in relation to child protection systems and means of responding to concerns relating to bullying or abuse
- Engage regularly with young people to understand their experiences – our experience is that young people share invaluable reflections on the benefits and challenges of the online world

- Keep up-to-date with news and research about the ever-evolving ‘digital landscape’ in terms of risks and opportunities – for example, being active on social media
- Proactively address the diverse needs of young people – they aren’t a homogenous group and issues like digital exclusion and poor literacy need to be tackled
- Continually assess the effectiveness of your organisation’s strategy for making resources and information available to young people – are you actually using the channels and methods that young people use? Are you a credible source of information?
- Constantly update the skills and knowledge of any relevant workers to use digital resources, taking a digital literacy approach
- Regularly review organisational policies, procedures and systems to ensure safe, effective and professional engagement with the online world.

Keep in mind that the risks and negatives of the internet are there for young people, even if agencies choose not to engage online. We cover this in more depth in the ‘Risks and Vulnerabilities’ section.

“We believe that planned and skilful use of technologies can bring real benefits.”

6. The way ahead

Digital technologies offer the potential of real benefits for young people's wellbeing and should be pursued as part of a wider programme of support.

There isn't a 'digital solution' for every issue, individual or situation. But there's a need for careful planning, delivery and evaluation of digital approaches as part of the wider mix of support

being offered. This toolkit will help explore many of these aspects so that any digital service responses can minimise the dangers and increase the prospects for safe, effective use with young people.

We encourage you to draw on its information and resources in taking forwards your own approach to digital mental health.





4. Online Lives

We've touched on why you might want to consider using digital technologies to support young people's mental health. In this section, we'll delve a little deeper into what young people's online lives look like. That's because for us to best support them, we need to be able to understand the digital dimensions of their worlds too.

In this section, you'll find:

1. Is there such a thing as 'Digital Natives'?
2. What about you?
3. Keeping in touch
4. Meeting like-minded people
5. Giving and receiving support
6. Creativity and expression
7. Dating and intimate relationships
8. Gaming
9. Experimenting with identity
10. Campaigning and activism
11. Buying and selling

1. Is there such a thing as 'Digital Natives'?

Young people born after 1987 are often called 'digital natives'. This is because they have never known a non-Internet world and make little distinction between online and offline. Instead, there is one world, with online and offline aspects. Some 'offline' relationships translate to 'online' contexts, some do not – and vice versa.

When we understand how young people interact, we can help them address risk as well as foster aspiration and achievement. We need to think about how digital tools, communities and relationships impact young people's lives and their mental health and wellbeing.

The main drawback to the 'digital natives' idea is the presumption that all young people are fully skilled and equipped to navigate the online world. In reality, many young people need significant help in making safe and effective use of the digital world, or in overcoming barriers to use. This includes young people with low general literacy levels and some young people with disabilities, among others. Practitioners need to become familiar with ways of supporting online skills and knowledge development as part of efforts to promote young people's mental wellbeing. These issues are discussed further in the '[Digital Citizenship](#)' section.

2. What about you?

Think of a typical day or week. What online technologies did you use? Did you log in to Facebook? Instagram? Use email? Google something? What were you trying to achieve when you used these technologies? Communicate with people? Get some help? Entertainment...?

A day in the life of

What did you do for each part of the day and what tech did you need?

Getting up	Morning	Lunchtime
Afternoon	Evening	Night

3. Keeping in touch

Strong interpersonal relationships are critical for the development of good mental health, and the resilience needed to face challenges. Social networking has been shown to play an important role in developing and strengthening relationships of all kinds.

Young people told us that the third space (i.e. not home or school/work) was very important to them. For many, it's a digital space. The Internet allows young people to address concerns about the lack of places to meet outside of school, lack of time, or structured activities. Social media helps them keep in touch with friends and maintain social networks when complexity (such as illness) or mobility (such as moving or transitioning to college/university) interferes with face-to-face interactions (Third, 2010; Collin, 2011). They can also use closed groups to keep to people they trust.

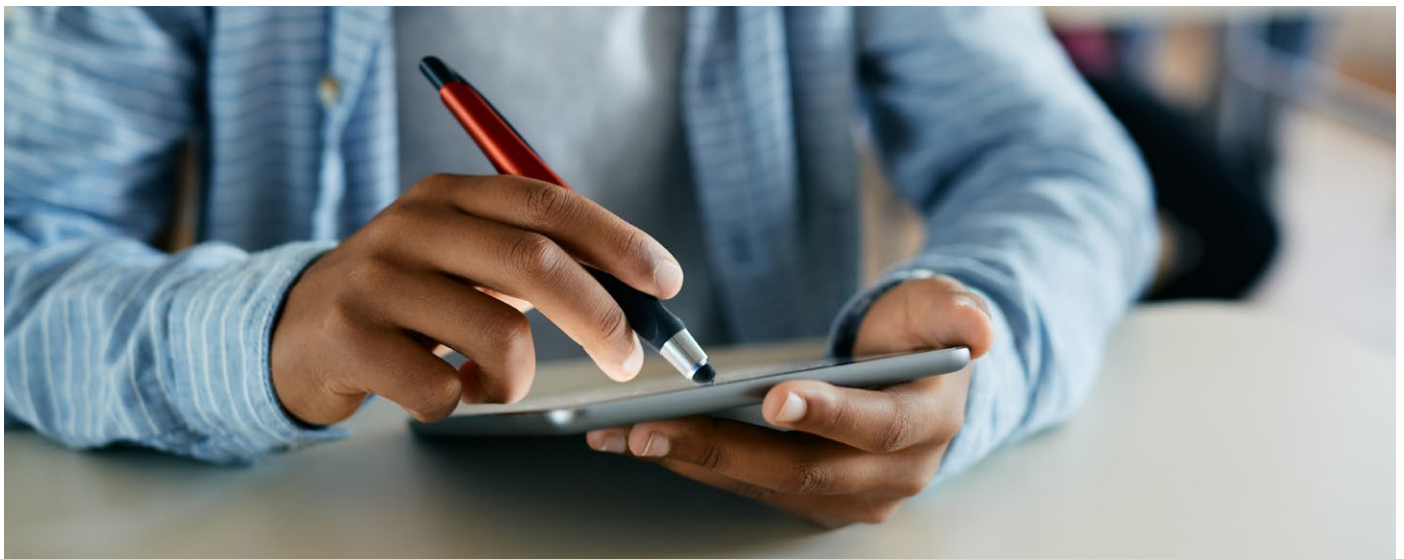
Traditionally, research has focused on how social networking helps maintain existing relationships, with the suggestion that relationships that occur solely online are 'weaker'. However, evidence shows that, for some of the most marginalised or socially isolated young people, online peer connections are a key source of social contact. Connections made with others in online environments can also enable marginalised

groups of young people to develop the confidence to use assets in their communities.

Tools like FaceTime and Zoom offer free video calls on computers and mobile devices anywhere in the world. The tech is amazing for keeping in touch but we need to be mindful that content may not be as private as we think: it can be saved, shared, sold or hacked into, and our location can be guessed. We discuss privacy and data sharing issues further in the '[Risks and Vulnerabilities](#)' chapter.

Want to read more?

- 1 Royal Society for Public Health, 2017. #StatusOfMind – Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Available online: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 Collin, P., et al, 2011. The benefits of social networking. Available online: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/476337/The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Services.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 Pew Research Centre, 2015. Teens, Technology and Friendships. Available online: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/08/06/teens-technology-and-friendships/> (Accessed: November 2022)



4. Meeting like-minded people

With the rise of online technologies, many young people use apps and sites of interest to find a hobby, meet like-minded people and find somewhere to fit in. There are many ways to connect with people who like the same things and have similar experiences. Online communities can offer help and peer support too.

Digital helps reduce the geographical or physical barriers and break down isolation. Online communities can also help develop transferable skills around communication, leadership and technical skills.

However, strangers are still strangers. We all need to understand privacy settings and how we share identifiable information. It is important to help young people develop the ability to safely engage and potentially meet others. This is covered in more detail in the [‘Risks and Vulnerabilities’](#) section.

“The Internet is a great place to meet people, establish an online identity and talk about the things you love.”

Young Scot, [Joining an Online Community](#)

5. Giving and receiving support

Helping others feels good, especially when your personal experience is useful to others. It's brilliant to feel there is someone out there who 'gets you' even if that's anonymous and to have a 'safe place' to talk, online or offline. An insight of our Project 99 report was how much young people support each other.

Most peer support tools have moderation and guidelines about triggering content (e.g. descriptions of abuse or self-harm which are usually hidden so people don't stumble over them). It is important that trusted adults provide young people with a space to discuss what they have come across online. It is easy to come across or deliberately seek the dark web, for example.

Peer support can help develop empathy as long as it's not at the cost to your own wellbeing, so it is important to self-manage your exposure to others' distress. It is key to know where to go for support and emergency help if needed.

Some people prey on vulnerable young people. They may be keen to please, or be desperate to be loved, wanted or validated. This can lead to risky behaviours which should be discussed.

Want to read more?

- 1 Naslund, J. A., Aschbrenner, K. A., Marsch, L. A., & Bartels, S. J., 2016. The future of mental health care: peer-to-peer support and social media. *Epidemiology and psychiatric sciences*, 25(2), 113–122.
- 2 Naslund, J.A., Bondre, A., Torous, J. et al, 2020. Social Media and Mental Health: Benefits, Risks, and Opportunities for Research and Practice. *J. technol. behav. sci.* 5, 245–257.

“The Internet can connect people with similar interests from across the globe.”

6. Creativity and expression

The Internet allows creative communities to find themselves and connect people with similar interests across the globe. Users can collaborate, share content and receive feedback from their peers. Young people have become particularly competent in producing and disseminating their own media as part of everyday life. For some, this creative process can even turn into a career.

The far-reaching benefits include:

- Increased literacy
- A sense of aspiration and self-worth
- Getting feedback and validation
- Encouraging experimentation with identity.

Young people need an awareness to manage this creative freedom. What do they know about copyright and intellectual property – in particular in relation to downloading and sharing pirated content? How would they feel if their content went viral?

Want to read more?

1 Royal Society for Public Health, 2017. #StatusOfMind – Social media and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Available online: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html> (Accessed: November 2022)

2 Collin, P., et al, 2011. The benefits of social networking. Available online: http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/476337/The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Services.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)

7. Dating and intimate relationships

A lot of people now meet their partners via online dating, not just young people. There are tools even designed for young people. Social media is the new ‘place’ for flirting for all ages but there are understandable concerns about whether people you talk to are actually who they say they are.

There are concerns about privacy as content can be shared, revealed or misused. It’s important that we understand online dating and/or flirting so we can equip young people to safely do what many will do anyway.

Want to read more?

1 Pew Research Centre, n.d. Teen Voices – Dating in the Digital Age. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/online-romance/> (Accessed: November 2022)

2 Internet Matters, n.d. Teens and Online Dating: Advice and Resources. Available at: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/teens-and-online-dating-advice-hub-for-parents/teens-and-online-dating-advice-resources/> (Accessed: November 2022)

3 Collin, P., et al, 2011. The benefits of social networking. Available online: http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/476337/The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Services.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)

8. Gaming

Evidence shows large numbers of young people spend their time gaming. In 2021, six in ten children played games online, with boys more likely to play games online than girls, although gaming is still common among both (Ofcom, 2021).

The Young and Well CRC Gaming Research Group published a [comprehensive review](#) on research linking video games to flourishing mental health, responding to concerns about the potential negative effects of gaming. They highlight that video games contribute to a young person's emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing.

In terms of wellbeing, this suggests that the way young people play as well as who they play with might be more important than what game they are playing. The review also discusses evidence to support a positive role for gaming in emotional intelligence and control, building of healthy relationships and social capital, including between those from marginalised groups, and improvements in self-esteem.

Gaming is therefore a key way in which some young people stay in contact with social groups, as most young people play games online with people they know. Some young people, however, make new friends through gaming as they play against strangers and chat with them while gaming. Ofcom reported that a third (33%) of young people said they chatted to people they only knew through the game (Ofcom, 2021). The likelihood of chatting to strangers also increases with age, from 25% of 8-11s to 45% of 26-17s and while this can often be harmless, it can bring with it its own risks too.

Another thing to consider is that social and immersive games such as Multiplayer Role Play Games (e.g. World of Warcraft) can also be associated with problematic Internet use. Escapism can be positive in terms of exploring identity, but negative escapism, i.e. 'disappearing' into the game to avoid dealing with challenges in the 'real world' can be a concern. The World Health Organisation has also classified "gaming disorder" as a condition where

"Video games have been shown to positively influence young people's emotional state, self-esteem, optimism, vitality, resilience, engagement, relationships, sense of competence."

an individual prioritises games over "other life for more than 12 months with negative consequences".

As with most areas of digital use, it is therefore important to understand a young person's gaming, so as to be able to guide appropriately and from a position of understanding.

Want to read more?

- 1 The Young and Well CRC Gaming Research Group, 2013. Videogames and Wellbeing: A Comprehensive Review. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251478450_Videogames_and_Wellbeing_A_Comprehensive_Review/link/0046351f016c21748e000000/download (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 Young Minds, n.d. A guide for parents – Gaming. Available at: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/gaming/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 The Mental Health Foundation, n.d. Gaming and mental health. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/gaming-and-mental-health> (Accessed: November 2022)

9. Experimenting with identity

Young people have always experimented with their identities through their clothing, appearance, music and sub-cultures.

The Internet allows young people to experiment more freely, to meet other people, and discover more and more quickly. This may have a positive effect, for example in enabling young LGBTQ+ people or young people with long-term conditions to connect with peers, especially if they are isolated geographically or socially. They can do all of this without even stepping foot outside of their house. The drawback is that unhelpful ideas and behaviours easily go viral.

Young people use social networking to experiment and seek legitimacy for their political, sexual, ethnic and cultural identities. This has been well demonstrated in groups of young people exposed to risk of poor mental health, including new migrants, ethnic minority groups and young people with long-term rare conditions. Groups like [Action for ME](#) have used online collaboration to connect distant peers. This can also be seen in the way young people with mental health problems use social media to express their feelings and get validation and peer connections.

The Internet has also added a new dimension to the long-standing problem of peer pressure, with certain social media platforms like Instagram often being referred to as a “highlights reel”, only showing the best parts of someone’s life. It can also add to body image concerns – with selfies, filters, and photo editing apps like FaceTune or

Photoshop for example creating unrealistic and ‘airbrushed’ beauty standards.

We need to be aware that all media content can become public and stay public well into adulthood. [Digital citizenship](#), which is covered in more detail later in the toolkit, needs to include awareness of personal brand online and exposure which may cause distress.

Want to read more?

- 1** Royal Society for Public Health, 2017. #StatusOfMind – Social media and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Available online: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2** Collin, P., et al, 2011. The benefits of social networking. Available online: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/476337/The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Services.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3** The Mental Health Foundation, n.d. Image editing apps and mental health. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/body-image-and-mental-health/image-editing-apps-and-mental-health> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 4** Stonewall, 2020. Staying safe online: practical strategies to best support all children and young people online, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. Available at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/staying-safe-online> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 5** Wood, M.A., Bukowski, W.M. & Lis, E., 2016. The Digital Self: How Social Media Serves as a Setting that Shapes Youth’s Emotional Experiences. *Adolescent Res Rev* 1, 163–173.

10. Campaigning and activism

The Internet offers new avenues for young people interested in campaigning and taking up causes they believe in:

- Citizen journalism offers people a voice and a role in society, which can be effective and empowering.
- Campaigns can reach millions of young people at risk of poor mental health. Political discussions such as the climate crisis and the referendum on Scottish independence galvanise young people into action.
- Charities such as [Fixers](#) and [Young Scot](#) support young people who wish to bring change in their communities and amongst peers.

It is a good space to develop the skills to evaluate content for reliability and appropriateness, or looking for the source of the content.

Involving the general public and connecting them to decision-making in communities is also associated with good mental health. Social networking provides new spaces for civil and political activity. Organisations are increasingly looking to use social networking to engage young people in government and community decision-making. In Scotland, [Young Scot](#), [NUS Scotland](#) and the [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) have sought to develop young people's interest and capacity to engage with civic activities using online communication. This can be incredibly empowering for young people.

11. Buying and selling

You can buy and sell almost anything on the Internet. Online auction sites like eBay and Facebook Marketplace are useful to buy and sell objects and are relatively straightforward and safe to use. Other sites such as Gumtree operate like traditional small ads with exchanges in person – so normal caution applies. Sites such as Etsy or DeviantArt can allow users to trade artwork or crafts, which can be validating. Apps like Depop and Vinted allow people to sell used clothes and other items.

Young people have always found ways to buy contraband or illegal material, legal or illegal highs, laxatives or stimulants (in eating disorders, for example). Adults have always tried to understand, notice and address this. The Internet simply broadens the access.







5. Digital Tools

As parents and professionals, we need to be able to understand the things our young people find and engage with online. This is so that they can come to us and we can feel confident to help.

This section of the toolkit summarises a range of digital tools that are available and highlights examples. We invite readers to discuss these tools and provide tips on how to keep a critical mind and evaluate them.

In this section, you'll find:

1. What are digital tools?
2. Different purposes
3. Universal Tools: Guides
4. Universal Tools: Social media
5. Universal Tools: Gaming
6. Universal Tools: Wearables
7. Navigating Mental Health Tools
8. Keeping a critical mind
9. How to evaluate digital tools?

1. What are digital tools?

We use this term to describe a piece of software that has a potential to support mental health. It might be a generic tool, or it could have been specifically designed to promote positive mental health. The impact may be direct or indirect, positive or negative.

We have listed below a range of different digital tools to give you a basic understanding of the types of tools out there. We'll cover some of the 'universal tools' in more detail in later chapters.

Apps

Apps are either free or for sale through shops like the App store for iOS and Google Play store for Android. Apps sold through the App store have to meet tight criteria before they're accepted.

Developers find the Android system more accessible so Apps may be less polished than iOS Apps. Users find that fewer Apps are available for Windows phones. There is a wide range of apps for health and mental health. NICE have reviewed some eMental Health services for clinical use.

Augmented reality

Augmented reality or AR is a type of immersive technology that overlays digital content in the real world, often through a phone or tablet. Social media platforms like Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram all have face filters which are a form of augmented reality. These can both simultaneously be used for amusement, but can also contribute to unrealistic beauty standards.

AR can also be used in a support setting. By combining simulated digital elements with a person's real environment, people can explore their mental health in a relatively realistic light. This can be helpful in cases of PTSD, social phobia, or anxiety disorders, for example.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging (IM) is a popular way to exchange text or media – for free or at a low cost. It uses mobile data or WiFi. Messaging services such as WhatsApp and Telegram are popular. Social media sites like Instagram and Facebook also have instant messaging features. Snapchat is another one where messages 'disappear' from the recipient's device seconds after viewing. Privacy, however, is still not guaranteed even in these cases. People can 'screenshot' the message and share it – or it can be hacked. Although young people can use IM for risky behaviours, these Apps are popular and well used.

Messaging services have also been used well by the third sector as another means of providing mental health support to young people. For example, the Jo Cox Foundation and Connection Coalition used WhatsApp as a free chatbot to provide information and support for people experiencing loneliness who needed advice quickly.



Search engine

A search engine is a tool for searching on the Internet for particular terms. Google is the best known search engine. It tailors the websites you see in searches according to what you type and the websites you tend to view.

Smartphones and tablets

Smartphones and tablets are devices that connect to the Internet and run software. For many young people, the telephone function is secondary. Mobile devices can be on a set contract, with an allocation of free calls, text messages and data. They can also be on a pay-as-you-go where you can buy bundles of data, texts and calls. 4G and 5G connections are faster than much broadband services, and often are cheaper.

There are different operating systems for devices. The operation software is what controls the device. For example, Windows on a PC, iOS on Apple, Android used by Google.

Software

Software is a programme run by a computer (a desktop, laptop, a mobile, a car engine, or a wearable device like a fitness tracker). You can think about any part of the computer that isn't physical as software, and anything that is as hardware. 'Apps' or 'applications' are a special type of software that can be installed.

Virtual reality

Virtual reality, or VR, is technology that allows users to be immersed in the image of a virtual world, typically through hardware like headsets or goggles. By turning their heads, they can see the 360° 'world' around them, and in some cases, they can move through and interact with that world. This can either be a real photographic image or video, or can be computer-generated, like a video game.

VR can be used to help people overcome their phobias and trauma by exposure therapy in a digital setting, or manage anxiety and stress by entering into a peaceful setting with calming visuals.

Wearables

Wearables are clothing and accessories that incorporate computer and electronic technologies, such as fitness or sleep trackers and pedometers.

Websites

A website is a space on the Internet, usually found by putting a web address into a browser (an application like Internet Explorer, Safari, or Chrome). You can view a website on different devices: computer, tablet, television, mobile phone, or watch face. Many websites adapt their appearance to the type of device you're using.

2. Different purposes

It's critically important to separate digital tools depending on their purpose:

- For clinical use: intended to be used in a service context and should demonstrate the appropriate efficacy and risk/benefit analysis. Clinical guidelines such as SIGN and NICE discuss some of these.
- For self-management or personal insight: for example, tools which use CBT principles or mindfulness are likely to use elements of tools which have an evidence base.
- Further tools solve a particular problem identified by users and may be so new as to not have been subject to trial or evaluation. In this case, it's important to understand how the tool works and how a young person uses it before recommending it.
- Finally, it's important to understand ways in which young people use existing digital tools in both positive and negative ways in relation to their mental health. It's unrealistic to expect young people not to use tools that could lead them into risky situations, or be a negative influence on their mental health. Equally, it's very hard to decrease the risk of social media services without negating the positives which are indisputably there.

It's also useful to distinguish between:

- Using existing digital tools for mental health purposes that were not created with that specific use in mind – e.g., blogging or having a closed Facebook group for support;
- Using tools that have been specifically designed to support mental health – e.g., using a mood tracker app like Daylio Journal to self-manage or a web tool like DocReady to prepare for a doctor's appointment.

The evidence base for digital health apps and tools is a growing area of research and commercial interest which is likely to develop rapidly in the coming years. It should be a central part of CPD to include the latest evidence developments in on-going professional development. Equally, young people are using digital tools now, and we need to be able to support and understand that as the evidence for both harms and benefits continues to develop.

3. Universal Tools: Guides

Young people use a range of digital tools in daily life. Professionals and adult supporters need to understand how young people lead their lives online. They need to respect their space in what is often connected to mental health, such as through their friendships, sex, sexuality and identity. If we don't appreciate this dimension, we miss an opportunity to provide constructive guidance.

Directories provide a first step 'go-to' guide for parents, workers and professionals to understand the range of digital tools that are available.

[Aye Mind](#) has a database of useful tools that can be used to support a young person's mental health. Some of them aren't accessible to young people in Scotland but can give ideas of tools that other services have created. You can also suggest resources you have discovered and provide feedback about tools you use. We encourage you to use your own judgement in recommending tools to young people. You might find the '[Evaluate Digital Tools](#)' section helpful for this.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) also provides a reliable guide to the social media platforms which young people use. [Better Internet for Kids](#), an EU initiative also provides a directory for a range of apps.



4. Universal Tools: Social media

Social media sites, or 'social networking services', are available through App stores and websites. They are designed to make it easy for content to be created and shared, and to participate in social networking.



Facebook

Facebook is one of the largest social media services, with over a billion users. It allows users aged 13+ to interact with 'friends' who also have accounts. Their privacy settings dictate who can see these updates: themselves, their friends, or the public. Some Apps also connect to Facebook and allow users to share information. Users can contact each other on Facebook Messenger.



Snapchat

Snapchat is an app for users aged 13+ that is popular with teenagers. It allows them to share user-generated photos and videos which only last on a person's screen for a matter of seconds. These are called 'snaps' which are sent from one user to another. When a snap has been sent to someone else and they have opened it, it will then be deleted.



TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform that lets users (13+) express themselves by sharing short videos. These tend to be music focused using the app's catalogue of music snippets, such as an individual recording short films of themselves dancing or taking part in a social media 'challenge'. But there are also unlimited number of videos on a variety of topics such as comedy, make-up tutorials, or current affairs.



Twitter

Twitter enables users (13+) to communicate with others in short statements called 'tweets' that are <280 characters, including spaces. Like this sentence.



YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website for people aged 13+ that is popular with young people. There is also a YouTube Kids for younger children. It's a source of entertainment, information and even education. The range of subjects is diverse. Recommendations for other videos accompany each video, so it's easy to stumble on triggering content amongst useful and supportive content.



Pinterest

Pinterest is a predominantly image-based site. Users can curate content related to their interests and hobbies, and can 'pin' content that they like to their boards.



Instagram

Instagram is a mobile platform which allows users to take, edit and share photographs and videos. Users can comment on other users' photos. Numerous organisations already use Instagram to reach out to young people and it's worth following their progress: see [Young Scot's Instagram](#) for example.



WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free mobile messaging app where users (aged 16+) can send and receive messages, images and videos to their phone contacts. Its users can create groups and send messages to many of their friends at the same time. It is end-to-end encrypted, which means that only the person who sends or receives the message can see its contents.



Blog

A blog is a type of website which allows individuals or organisations to publish content and engage with readers through comments. Blogs are often used as an online personal journal. There are a range of mental health blogs that are widely regarded. Every year, the [Mind Media Awards](#) recognises some of these blogs and resources. We encourage you to explore them.



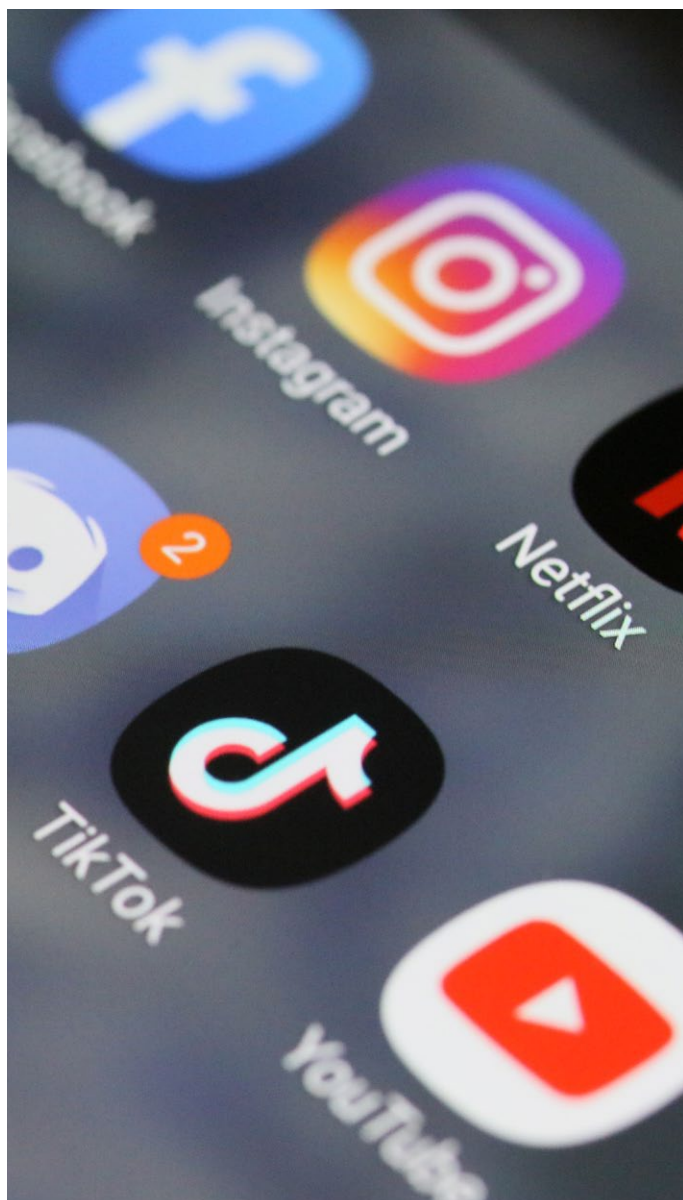
Vlog

A vlog is a video blog. Instead of writing or publishing artwork, the author creates and shares videos.



Some media formats

Other media formats have developed to be shared through social media. For example, memes are images, videos or pieces of text, often with a funny message. Internet users share it, sometimes with slight variations. A GIF is a short animation made from a series of images.



5. Universal Tools: Gaming

Gaming has been part of youth culture for several decades now. Faster Internet, connected consoles, handheld devices and mobile phones have changed gaming. Participation in gaming has increased in complexity and breadth. As a result, professionals need to understand the role of gaming in young people's lives. It enables them to help young people navigate these experiences.

Key areas of gaming include:

- PC/Consoles
- Internet Games and Role Play
- Mobile Gaming

Gaming is often portrayed as negative and dangerous. The association with violence, sexism and addiction has become part of the conventional narrative. Actually, the evidence is not as clear cut. When used positively, gaming can be a helpful way

to look after our mental health and wellbeing. This is because it gives a space to have fun, stay connected with friends and family, as well as helping us to learn new skills like problem-solving. There is good evidence that even playing violent games in teams can have benefits.

Gamification can also be a way to create engaging mental health tools that are like games. Game contexts are a good way to explore feelings and mental health. Think of the way you may use other interests like sport to start conversations, and consider how you could do the same with gaming too.





6. Universal Tools: Wearables

As the internet and digital technology have developed, we have seen an increase in the availability of technology which can be used to gather and use information about ourselves. This may be in clinical settings via ehealth or telehealth tools that, for example, monitor blood sugar or heart rate. It may be in terms of leisure tools such as fitness trackers, wearables or sensor based technology that can control our houses or devices for us.

Sensors and computers that gather data without input and connect to the internet make up the so called 'internet of things'. The phenomenon of gathering and using personal metrics or information is known as 'quantified self'. Quantified self-activities are very useful in mental health improvement, but can also be a source of concern in some circumstances.

Personal fitness trackers like Fitbit, or app based exercise and diet trackers like MapMyRun, Strava or My Fitness pal can help track activity, sleep,

and diet, all things that can contribute to and encourage positive mental health and wellbeing, especially in terms of self-management strategies.

There are, however, concerns that this technology could be misused by people with eating disorders, such as through counting calories or obsessive exercise for example, or may create concerns for those prone to obsessive thinking. Equally, sensor technology is viewed with some suspicion by some people who experience paranoia or psychosis, particularly when propositions are made to replace face to face monitoring of wellbeing or care with remote sensors.

It is likely that the internet of things and sensor based technology will grow in the coming years, with general and mental health specific applications. Therefore, we recommend being open to discussion about the use of monitoring tools and software as part of digital history taking, and potential treatment options.

Mental health tools

Technology for information >	Online information services	NHS Inform
	Service directories and mapping tools	Aye Mind
Technology for delivery of services >	Technology to improve communication between young people and services	Doc Ready
	E-health services for young people's mental health	Kooth
	Service based recovery and self-management	Recovery Record
Technology for self-management, peer support and engagement >	Communities of interest/informal peer support	Mind to Mind, Side by Side
	Campaigning and engagement	Young Minds
	Self management	Headspace
Technology for professionals >	Continuing professional development	MindEd

7. Navigating Mental Health Tools

As we have seen in this chapter, digital tools for mental health are a major area of growth across the world. Globally, there is a proliferation of websites, apps, forums, blogs, vlogs and other digital tools devoted to mental health. There is increasing recognition that digital tools have the ability both to reach and engage unmet needs and facilitate earlier intervention. Navigating these tools, however, is a challenge both for end users and professionals – this is what we are now going to turn to.

To do this, we need to understand the types of tools available, how these fit into people's lives, and importantly in clinical practice, how we assess the risk/benefit of using digital tools. At a minimum, we need to understand where digital fits in the mental health of those we support or work with. We need to be able to:

- Ask questions
- Understand contexts
- Make useful suggestions when asked by young people who expect adult supporters to understand their lives.

For people working with young people, it's key to have the skills to:

- Have the conversations
- A place to find out more
- A set of trusted tools in your back pocket to be able to suggest.

For professionals, digital history taking and understanding the context is key. Being able to then use that to formulate ways to manage any associated challenges and exploit the assets is central to a personalised, outcomes focused approach to support.

In the preliminary work for Aye Mind, we built a map of tools that mapped tools by their function, which has been summarised in the table on the page before this one. We have presented a case study for each of these areas to allow you to examine one tool and ask: how you might use it, and also, in some cases, what concerns you might have?

8. Keeping a critical mind

At Aye Mind, we have not conducted trials, nor assessed the effectiveness of all digital resources: we highlight resources that are available and seem credible. We invite young people, supporters and professionals to use the toolkit, and any professional guidelines they have, to help develop their own considered judgement.

There are considerable challenges in evaluating health related digital tools, the main one being the fast pace of change. Digital moves faster than research: by the time research is completed and published, digital technology has moved.

Equally, innovation funded by start-up investors is not always evaluated beyond the user opinion. The ones funded by the public and charitable sectors don't always include funding of rigorous evaluation. That said, there are some digital interventions which have a strong evidence base, and others that are developed using evidence-based principles and so, can be said to be evidence informed.

9. How to evaluate digital tools?

To help develop considered judgement, we have developed a ‘five things to think about’ approach to help you make a basic assessment of a tool or app which you will find on the next page. We hope this will enable you to consider a tool and the way a young person uses or seeks to use it.

The Open University also uses the PROMPT model, inviting people to consider:

P-resentation

- Is this information presented clearly?
- Is the language appropriate?
- Is it succinct?
- Can I find what I need here?

R-elevance

- Does this information match my needs right now?
- What is it mostly about?

O-bjectivity

- Is there bias in what you are reading?
- Might the author/s have any hidden agendas? Have they been selective with their evidence?
- Is the language used emotive?
- Are opinions expressed?
- Are there sponsors?
- What are they selling? A particular product, a corporate view?

M-ethod

- Is it clear how any research was carried out?
- How was data gathered?
- If statistical data is presented, what is this based on?
- Was the sample used really representative?
- Were the methods appropriate, rigorous, etc.?

P-rovenance

- Is it clear who produced this information?
- Where does it come from? Whose opinions are these?
- Do you trust this source of information?

T-imeliness

- When was it produced or published?
- Is it current?
- Has the climate/situation changed since this information was made available?
- Is it still up to date?

Want to read more?

1 The Open University, n.d. PROMPT Evaluation Criteria. Available at: <https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/activity/XK1087#page1> (Accessed: November 2022)

2 The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, 2013. Better Practice Guide for Services: Using technologies safely and effectively to promote young people's wellbeing. Available at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Documents/better-practice-guide.pdf> (Accessed: November 2022)

5 Things to think about

Does it work?

- Does the software work reliably?
- Which devices run the tool?
- What are the reviews online and on app stores?
- Is there any evidence base? (direct or in terms of the principles, eg. mindfulness, CBT)

Where did it come from, where is it going?

- Is it clear who the tool belongs to and how it can be used?
- Who is funding this and where does its income come from? Is there advertising?
- How easy is it to contact the owners?

Are any risks managed and addressed?

- Are there any risks identified and are they understood by its owners/by young people?
- Is there safe guarding policy or moderation?
- How is the data used and held?
- What are the security implications (within the tool and in wider world?)
- Are young people using it anyway?
- Do you need to support them to mitigate risks?

What and who is it for?

- Is it clear who the tool is for?
- Does it seem to work for them?
- Does it meet a mental health need?

How do you get it?

- What are the costs of accessing the tool?
- Is there a cost to the user, is it proportionate?
- Is there any information about access for equality groups?
- Can you get it on your work IT systems?





6. Risks and Vulnerabilities

Research indicates that online risks are not extremely different than the ones young people have long faced offline. Research points out that young people who are most at risk offline continue to be most at risk online.

This section covers some of the key risks and vulnerabilities around using digital technologies. In it, you'll find information on:

1. Understanding risks
2. Distorted view and social comparison
3. Sleep and attention
4. Sexting
5. Revenge porn
6. Gossip and online bullying
7. Privacy and digital footprints
8. Gambling
9. Access to inappropriate content

“Harnessing, expanding and promoting their skills and understandings of online technologies may hold the key for overcoming the issues of concern.”

1. Understanding risks

Most reviews suggest that in order to mitigate the risks which young people encounter, we need to change our approach to cyber safety. We need to focus on the way young people actually understand risk and Internet use, as opposed to the way adults often perceive that they do. For example, even violent games can have creative, social and emotional benefits.

As emphasised in research, policy can often focus primarily on the negatives of online technologies and social media. This frames digital citizenship as online risk-management. But developing young people's digital citizenship opens up the potential to maximise the wide range of benefits that are associated with online communicative practices.

It's important to remember that vulnerability is “a circumstance young people may experience or are exposed to, as opposed to a concept that they in themselves are. By suggesting they are vulnerable in and of themselves, young people's individual identities and uniqueness are diminished, and they are homogenised into a definition which does not recognise their individuality as anything other than vulnerable.”

This recognises that young people facing vulnerability are at risk from poor mental health, but that they might use technology to emphasise their identity, reduce isolation and structural barriers, and access peer support and treatment.

2. Highlight reel and social comparison

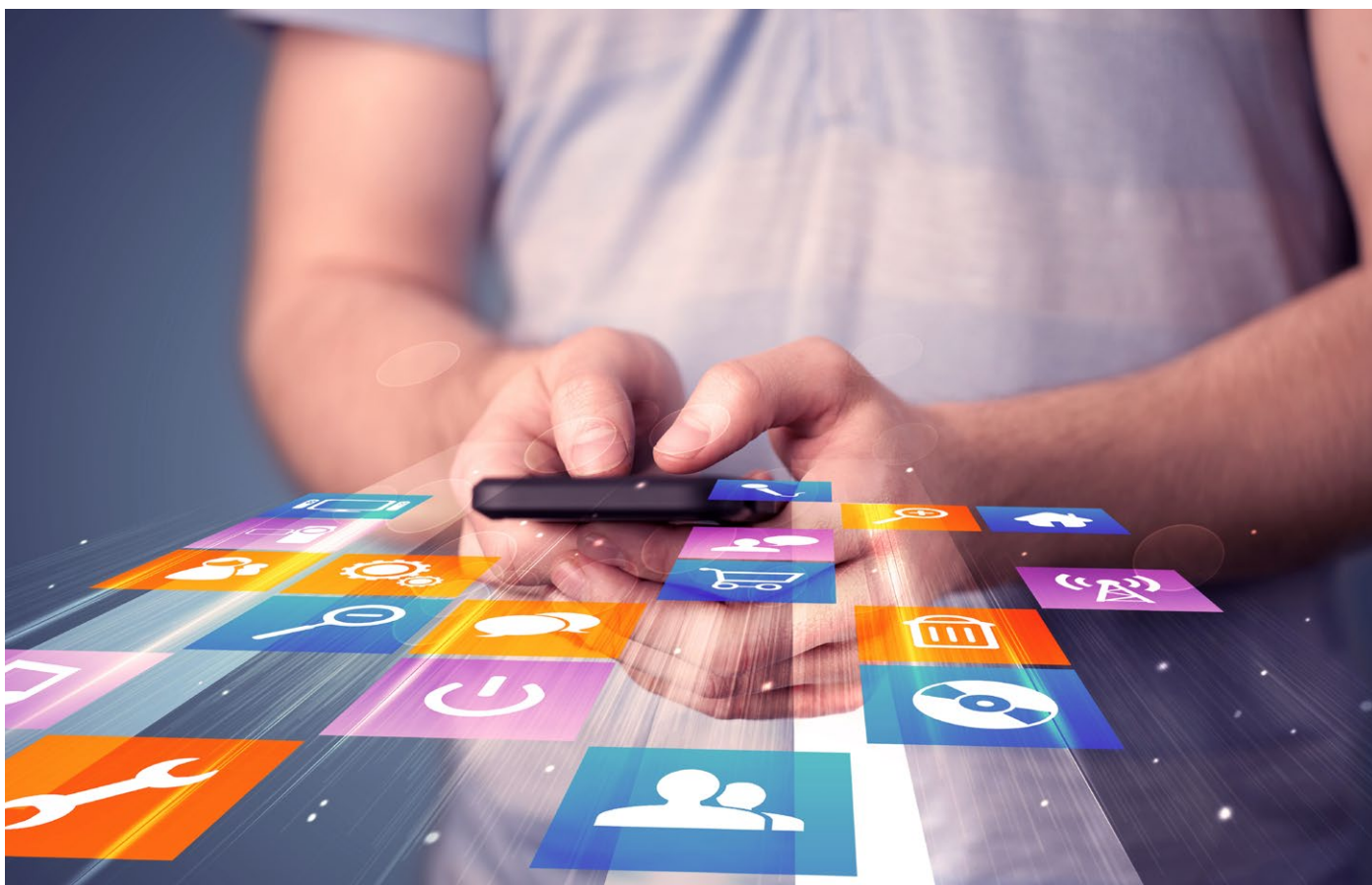
What's posted online is not necessarily a representation of what happens offline.

Social media users, including young people, have often admitted that their online profile is not a reflection of their real lives. Instead, they frequently lie or put a gloss over their life, relationships, promotions at work and holidays. This has often been referred to as the social media “highlight reel” where our daily struggles or typical routines are in contrast to the idealised lives that are portrayed on social media.

Social media and the internet more generally can also be harmful because it provides unlimited opportunities for people to compare themselves to others. This could be their friends, celebrities, or other people on those platforms. While this can be a source of motivation and inspiration, it is often associated with the development of negative self-perceptions, feelings of inadequacy, disordered eating, and low mood.

Visible friend counts and like counts can make these social comparisons easier because there is ‘data’ to show if someone is more or less popular than someone else. While this of course isn't true, many people take these numbers seriously.





3. Sleep and attention

We know that sleep plays an important role in young people's overall health and wellbeing, and a decline in sleep has been shown to be associated with a decline in cognitive and behavioural functioning and poor academic performance.

Childwise found that children are not only getting mobile phones at an earlier age, but that more than half say they sleep with their phone beside their bed (Childwise, 2020). There is a growing concern that 'screen time' can have a negative impact on sleep, with digital devices said to negatively impact the sleep of three in ten young people (Nominet, 2022).

This can be due to the fact that young people are staying up later consuming media, as well as the increased mental or emotional stimulation from media content, or the effects of light emitted by our digital devices on our sleep. In studies and

mindfulness practices, it has been recommended that individuals take an hour 'screen-free' before going to bed.

It's not black and white that digital devices are bad for sleep, however. This is because general use of music can help better sleeping patterns, and there are dedicated apps like [Sleepio](#) that help people to sleep too. Therefore, when talking about digital technologies and sleep we need to be thinking about how the technology is being used.

Want to read more?

1 The Sleep Foundation, 2022. Sleep hygiene. Available at: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene> (Accessed: November 2022)

4. Sexting

Wondering what that is?

Sexting = sex + texting. It is when people share a sexual message or naked photos or videos with another person. It is said to be a growing trend amongst young people and some also feel under pressure or can be coerced into sending naked images.

Why does it happen?

Sexting begins when young people who know each other, are in a relationship or have each other's numbers want to begin a sexual exploration virtually. In research, it has been pointed out that young people are aware of the risks involved when sending naked images or videos although sexual arousal might have led to disregarding this risk at the time. There are different reasons why young people share nude photos. It doesn't necessarily mean that the young person is having sex.

Why is it risky?

Once a young person sends it, it's out of their control what happens next. If using Snapchat, even though the photo will disappear after a few seconds, there's still the chance of someone taking a screenshot of it. If it's via WhatsApp or other apps, it can be saved straight onto the recipient's device.

Sexting can leave young people at risk of bullying, isolation, or being blackmailed.

It's worth remembering though that teenagers are still teenagers. They will take risks, but we need to be more prepared so that when they need us, we can offer help. It makes sense to practice safe sex, so does safe sexting.

What's the law?

In Scotland, the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act means that anyone who is convicted of sharing intimate images without consent could face up to five years in prison.

Want to read more?

- 1 The NSPCC, 2022. Sexting: advice for professionals. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/sexting-advice-professionals#article-top> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 Internet Matters, 2020. Look at Me: Teens, Sexting and Risks. Available at: <https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Internet-Matters-Look-At-Me-Report-1.pdf> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 Stonewall, 2020. Staying safe online: practical strategies to best support all children and young people online, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. Available at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/staying-safe-online> (Accessed: November 2022)



5. Revenge porn

Wondering what that is?

Revenge porn is when private sexual images/videos are shared online without the consent of the person who's in them. Mostly, people do it to hurt an ex-partner. But this content can also be hacked and shared by strangers.

Revenge porn happens mainly with the intention to shame and/or embarrass the person on the images/videos. These can also be linked to the person's online account – giving it a name and personal information so that it causes maximum harm to the victim.

What's the law?

While sexting is usually something individuals want to do, revenge porn is done against a person's consent. Since 2014, it is illegal to publish private sexual images of another person without their consent.

Want to read more?

1 UK Government, 2014. New law to tackle revenge porn. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-law-to-tackle-revenge-porn> (Accessed: November 2022)

6. Gossip and online bullying

Bullying is a combination of what someone did and the impact it had. This behaviour can make people feel frightened and left out and it can happen face to face and online, or both at the same time. In 2018, almost half (47%) of all participants (1,875 adults aged 16+) surveyed by Ofcom reported seeing online hate in the past year (Ofcom, 2018). A survey by Respect Me revealed that 92% of young people bullied online knew the person bullying them (Respect Me, 2014). Anonymity is not as prevalent a factor as some may think for online bullying.

Online bullying happens on any personal device that young people have continuous access to. Due to the 24/7 nature of the internet, it can happen anywhere, anytime. This makes it hard for someone to escape from when they are being bullied online.

Due to the nature of the internet, it can also be hard to control the spread of messages, images, or videos. This means that many people can see them in a short space of time, increasing the reach of gossip and rumours. Online bullying can, however, also leave a trail of evidence which can be helpful when dealing with it and reporting it.

The most common bullying behaviour experienced face to face includes name calling, rumours and hurtful comments, this is the same for online bullying. Some common types of online bullying include:

- **Sending hurtful messages**
- **Tagging someone in an embarrassing photo**
- **Deliberately leaving someone out of an online group**
- **Outing someone (revealing sensitive or personal information about them, without their consent)**

Online bullying is happening. We need to address this the same way we address all types of bullying no matter where they happen. This includes by dealing with behaviour, what someone did and the impact it had. Online bullying also needs to be talked about in the context of respectful relationships and equality, like we would for any face-to-face concerns.

Want to read more?

- 1** Respect Me, n.d. Online bullying. Available at: <https://respectme.org.uk/adults/online-bullying/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2** Childnet, n.d. Online bullying. Available at: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/online-bullying/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3** The UK Safer Internet Centre, n.d. Online bullying. Available at: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/online-issue/online-bullying> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 4** The NSPCC, n.d. Online abuse. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/online-abuse/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 5** Stonewall, 2020. Staying safe online: practical strategies to best support all children and young people online, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. Available at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/staying-safe-online> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 6** Kwan, I., Dickson, K., Richardson, M., MacDowall, W., Burchett, H., Stansfield, C., Brunton, G., Sutcliffe, K., & Thomas, J., 2020. Cyberbullying and Children and Young People's Mental Health: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews. *Cyberpsychology, behavior and social networking*, 23(2), 72–82.

7. Privacy and digital footprints

We all need to understand our privacy settings and how we share identifiable information online. Try searching your name and seeing what information comes up. It can often be surprising how much information we have readily shared about ourselves that anyone with internet connection can access.

Every time we go online, we leave a digital footprint of where we've been and what we've done. This footprint could be good or bad – it could show things you may later be embarrassed about, or it could help others see your achievements. Things that can form part of a young person's digital footprint could include photos and posts on social media, games played online, information collected by apps, comments or arguments that they have been in. Checking privacy settings and being mindful of what content is shared and who it is shared with can help to manage a digital footprint.

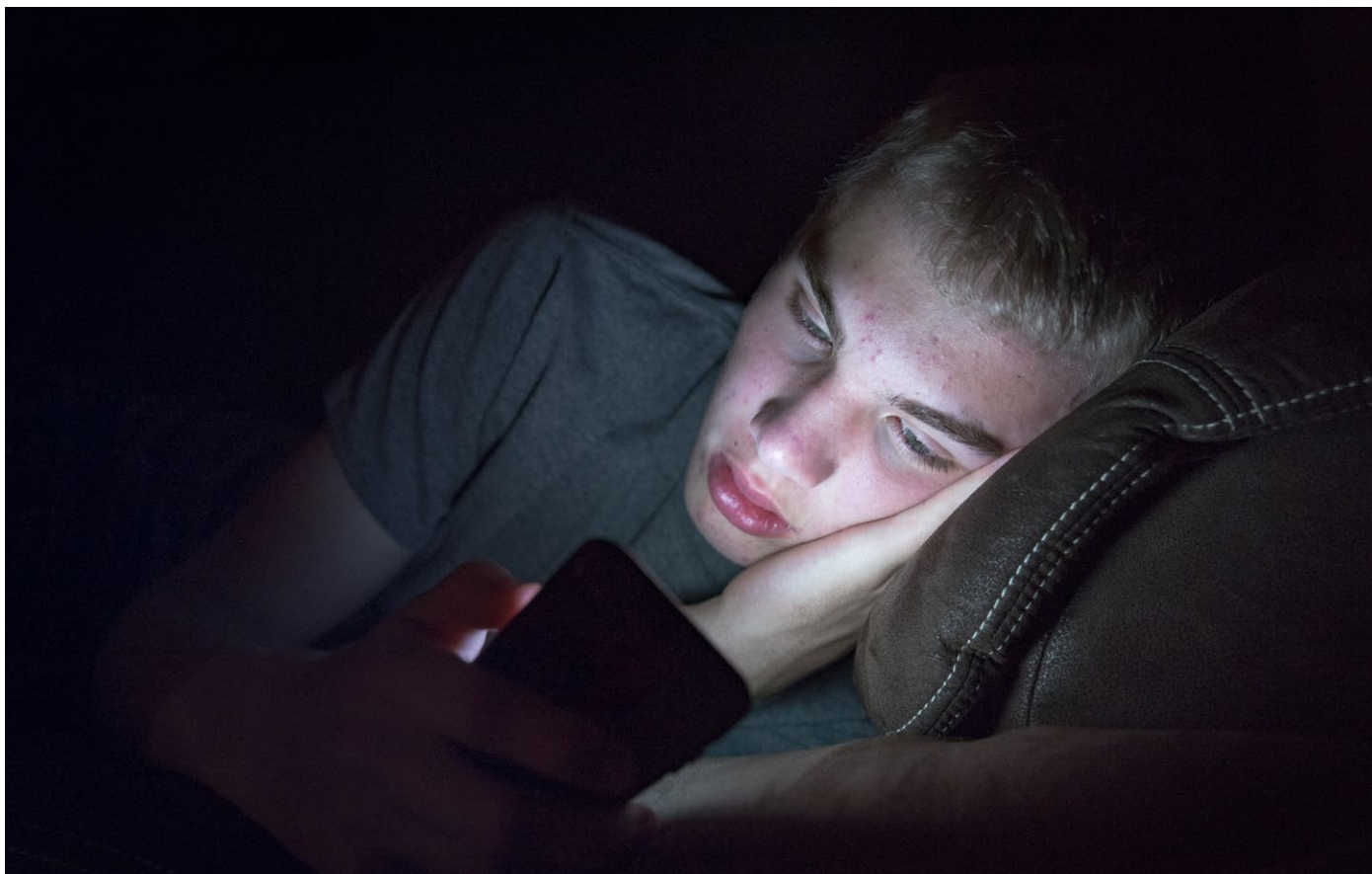
Studies have shown that digital competence doesn't reduce the likelihood that children would be upset by online risks (Staksrud, 2013). They have, however, found that children with public profiles experienced more risks than those who followed guidelines about privacy settings. This includes keeping certain personal information private such as their location, address, or where they attend school or college.

Anything that is shared online, even in private groups, is always at risk of becoming public – now or in the future – with potentially devastating consequences. Private Messaging can be challenging and young people need to be confident to manage a situation and escalate it to an outside party when needed. Online group dynamics can also be tricky without non-verbal communication and require good 'netiquette' skills.

Want to read more?

- 1 The Information Commissioner's Office, n.d. School Resources – Privacy and Personal Data. Available at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/posters-stickers-and-e-learning/school-resources/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 The Information Commissioner's Office, n.d. Online Safety. Available at: <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/online/social-networking/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 Childline, n.d. Taking care of your privacy and digital footprint. Available at: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/taking-care-your-digital-footprint/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 4 The UK Safer Internet Centre, 2017. Online reputation – taking care of your digital footprint, advice for young people. Available at: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/online-reputation-taking-care-of-your-digital-footprint-advice-for-young-people> (Accessed: November 2022)

"Every time we go online, we leave a digital footprint."



8. Gambling

According to the Gambling Commission, 31% of 11 to 16 year olds spent their own money on gambling in the twelve months prior to taking part in the survey (Gambling Commission, 2022).

Common online gambling activities include betting on eSports, spending money on online instant win games, betting on websites or apps, online casino games, or online bingo. This can also involve paying money to open 'loot boxes' in video games, which are randomised rewards within games that can be bought with virtual currencies or real-world money.

The availability of online gambling and access to private devices may lead to greater access to gambling for young people, particularly older young people. Problem gambling may well be part of the picture in young men who present with distress

and has been associated with suicide, depression, and anxiety.

Want to read more?

- 1 Gamble Aware, 2021. Lifting the Lid on Loot-Boxes: Chance-Based Purchases in Video Games and the Convergence of Gaming and Gambling. Available at: https://www.begambleaware.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Gaming_and_Gambling_Report_Final.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 The Gambling Commission, 2022. Young people and gambling 2022. Available at: <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/report/young-people-and-gambling-2022> (Accessed: November 2022)

9. Access to inappropriate content

The Internet is vast. You can find almost anything within a few clicks. At any point, any one of us can come across a post or website that we might find upsetting. Has this happened to you already?

Research shows young people are accessing inappropriate content right now. According to the NSPCC, 56% of 11-16 year olds have seen explicit material online (NSPCC, 2016). More than a third of children aged 8-17 had seen worrying or nasty content online, with some inadvertently sharing it further (Ofcom, 2022).

Inappropriate content can mean different things for different people but what we mean here is content which is inappropriate for individuals for their age. This can include pornographic images/videos, hate speech, or content promoting eating disorders or self-harm. Online activities that increase the likelihood of young people seeing inappropriate content includes:

- Joining social networks before they are the minimum age
- Playing games and using apps that aren't age-appropriate
- Watching live streams which might show inappropriate content

Some communities can support 'anti-recovery' strategies and promote self-harm, suicide or eating disorders. It is important to understand why a young person uses these tools and what they are getting from them. It may also be a challenge as young people may simultaneously use both positive tools and less helpful resources, potentially on the same social media site. Young people told us directly that they are able to take steps to address risks but they need adult help too.

It's always good to talk about what we might see online that makes us feel uncomfortable. You can always start a chat with a young person that could include:

- What made them feel uncomfortable and why?
- Linking these things to situations taking place offline
- Reassuring them that they can always talk about what makes them feel uncomfortable
- Showing them how to hide, restrict, block or report websites, apps and users.

Want to read more?

1 Internet Matters, n.d. Inappropriate content. Available at: <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/inappropriate-content/> (Accessed: November 2022)

"56% of 11-16 year olds have seen explicit material online."



7. Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship is about preparing young people to safely and responsibly access digital technologies, as well as being an active and respectful member of society, both online and offline.

Anyone who uses digital technology can be said to be a digital citizen. A good digital citizen, however, is someone who is informed about both the benefits and risks of technology.

This chapter covers the concept of digital citizenship and why it's important that we teach and promote it to young people.

In this section, you'll find

1. The educational context
2. Formal and informal learning
3. Understanding digital literacy
4. 5Rights: Digital rights
5. Digital inclusion

1. The educational context

Education for digital citizenship is a vital component of the [Curriculum for Excellence](#). It helps young people develop the skills and experience outside the classroom.

Digital citizenship is about individuals developing the ability to take up their place in society as responsible, successful, effective and confident citizens both now and in the future.

It's vital for young people that citizenship education and support for engagement in community life should include digital citizenship and all that it entails.

In a study, Collin et al (2011) highlight that for people to experience the positive aspects of social media, they need to have a level of awareness of good 'cyber-citizenship':

"Importantly, the benefits of Social Networking Services (SNS) use are dependent on good Internet and media literacy: having the skills to analyse and create media content. Maximising the benefits of SNS and promoting Internet and media literacy may help protect young people from many of the risks of online interaction, such as cyber-bullying."

Media literacy should therefore be a priority for young people, to help them make the most of the opportunities afforded by online communication and avoid the associated risks. This is important in supporting the positive value of social networking to promote mental health and wellbeing.

The critical digital citizenship agenda therefore needs to be embedded into educational narratives, where young people are asked to think about the benefits and potential dangers of digital media in and outside of school. This needs staff to be confident to enable digital media projects to be integrated into everyday learning.

Want to read more?

- 1 Collin, p., et al, 2011. The benefits of social networking. Available online: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/476337/The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Services.pdf (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2 McGillivray et al., 2015. Young people, digital media making and critical digital citizenship. Leisure Studies. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02614367.2015.1062041> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 3 SWGfL, n.d. Safe and Empowered: Responding to a Digital Generation – Resources webinars for educators in Scotland on online safety and digital citizenship. Available at: <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/online-safety-scotland/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 4 FutureLearn, 2021. What is Digital Citizenship? – A guide for teachers. Available at: <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/what-is-digital-citizenship-teacher-guide> (Accessed: November 2022)

"A greater focus on the role of digital literacies in enabling young people to navigate their way through an increasingly complex, digitally mediated world is needed."



2. Formal and informal learning

Online learning environments, personal devices and ICT in schools have the potential to improve learning outcomes. This is already recognised in Scotland and the UK. Social media can bring together students from diverse geographical areas or cultural backgrounds. Social networking between teachers and students is also seen to improve rapport, motivation and engagement with education.

Social networking can assist young people in learning and developing skills outside formal environments, including transferable skills relevant to the modern workplace, collaborative skills and sharing content in communities of interest, and in understanding of citizenship.

As social networking participation can be personalised and controlled, it can be an important tool for those who struggle in traditional learning environments or have specific interests or needs, such as young parents.

There are benefits to more formal digital education and training for young people to complement their informal learning too: “We

often wrongly assume that young people have a complete set of digital skills because they grow up surrounded by digital technologies. The skills that they acquire on the daily basis by using social networks and retrieving online content are not sufficient in the labour market. Required productivity skills can be acquired only by adequate digital education and training.”- Kestutis Juskevicius, EU Digital Champion Lithuania

Scotland’s Digital Strategy highlights the importance of ensuring that we have a strong, digitally skilled workforce. This requires digital skills and knowledge to be embedded into our education systems, higher education, and apprenticeships.

Want to read more?

1 Scottish Government, 2021. A Changing Nation: How Scotland Will Thrive In A Digital World. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-changing-nation-how-scotland-will-thrive-in-a-digital-world/> (Accessed: November 2022)

3. Understanding digital literacy

The traditional definition of literacy is the ability to read and write or the competence in a specific area. This definition has expanded over the years: to engage with life in the city, citizens need to be able to use these skills to understand, think critically, participate in, and change the world around them.

When applied to technology, it is traditionally called 'Digital Literacy'. There are number of components to online media literacy:

- Critical thinking – Asking questions and remaining sceptical will help young people to recognise what is fake news and whether information is valid or not
- Communication and collaboration – Creating online communities and a sense of identity
- Online safety – Knowing the risks, keeping information safe, being kind, and not downloading unknown files
- Finding information – Using digital tools to find information, knowing what plagiarism is and how to avoid it
- Technical skills – Having a good level of IT skills, knowing how to use devices
- Digital Content Creation – Using digital tools to create and collaborate with others



The approach of ‘learning by doing’ helps young people develop online media literacy by creating, sharing and using online content that isn’t always part of the school curriculum.

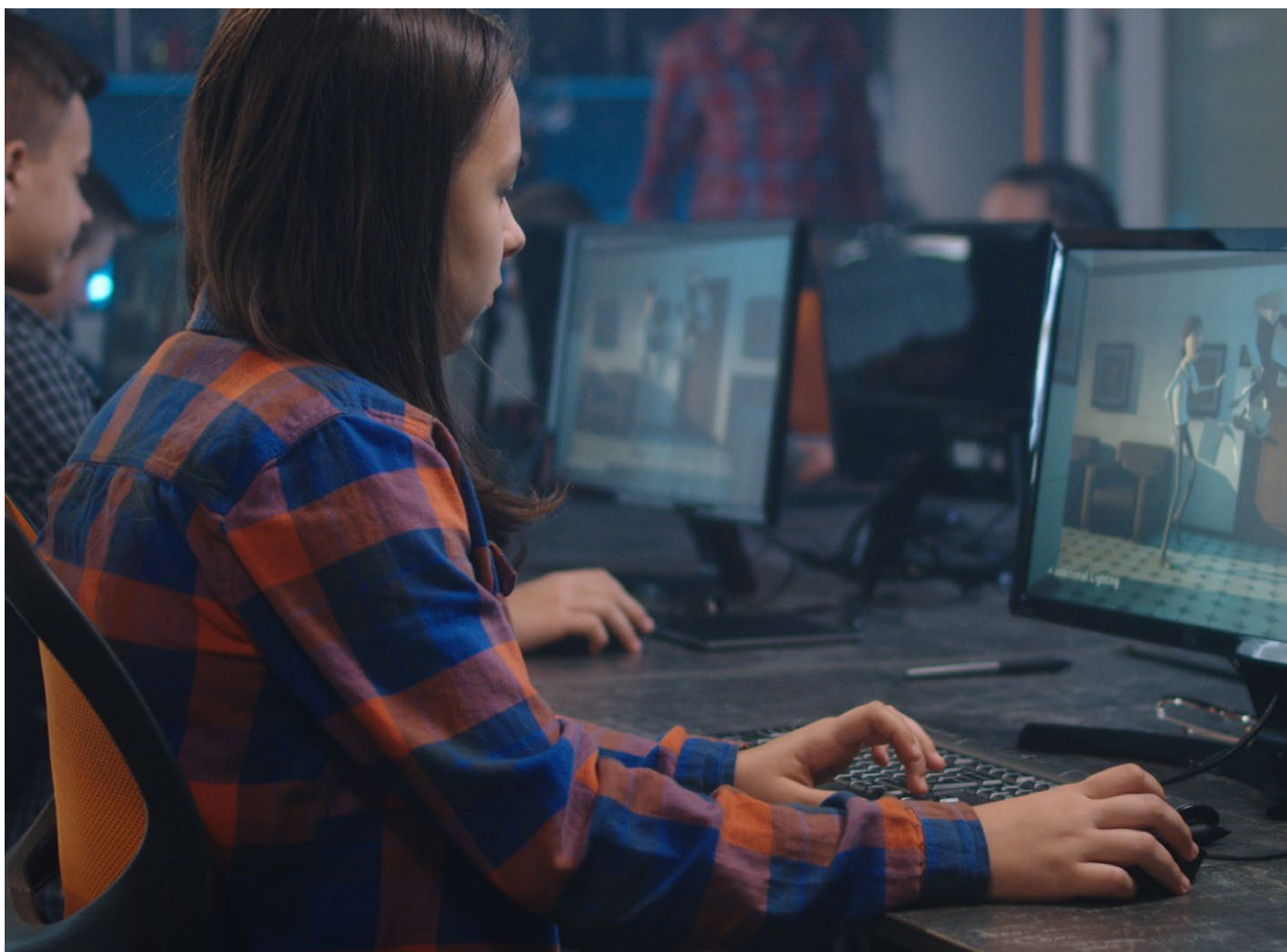
Want to read more?

There are a range of digital literacy frameworks that have been developed:

1 Unicef, 2019. Digital Literacy for Children – Exploring definitions and frameworks. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/11FCv6s9byn_c0LtQOqxeJMCKchz-XLMS/view (Accessed: November 2022)

2 DigComp 2.2 Framework, n.d. Available at: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp/digcomp-framework_en (Accessed: November 2022)

3 Jisc, n.d. Building digital capabilities: The six elements defined. Available at: https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6611/1/JFL0066F_DIGIGAP_MOD_IND_FRAME.PDF (Accessed: November 2022)



4. 5Rights: Digital rights

5Rights is a framework of five clear and simple principles to enable children and young people to access the internet creatively, knowledgeably and fearlessly. These principles translate the existing rights of young people under the age of 18 from the physical into a digital world context. The five rights are:

- **The right to remove:** to easily edit or delete online content they have created, and access simple and effective ways to dispute online content about them.
- **The right to know:** to know who holds and profits from their information, what their information is being used for, and whether it is being copied, sold, or traded.
- **The right to safety and support:** to be confident they will be protected from

illegal practices, and supported if confronted by troubling and upsetting scenarios online.

- **The right to make informed and conscious choices:** to engage online but also to disengage at will and not have their attention held unknowingly.
- **The right to digital literacy:** to be taught the appropriate skills to use and critique digital technologies and be confident in managing new social norms.

Want to read more?

1 5Rights Foundation, n.d. Children and Young People's rights. Available at: <https://5rightsfoundation.com/our-work/childrens-rights/> (Accessed November 2022)

5. Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is said to be the strategy that makes sure all people have an equal opportunity and skills to access and benefit from digital technologies.

While more and more people are online, we must remember that not everyone is. Many people across the UK lack access to a computer or internet, which could lead to a lack of digital literacy and therefore employability skills. In 2018, 12% of those aged between 11 and 18 years reported having no internet access at home from a computer or tablet (ONS, 2019).

Therefore, it's important to remember that not all young people have the access, skills, or confidence to use digital tools – inequalities and barriers exist in the online world too.

In the [Scottish Government's National Digital Strategy for Scotland \(2021\)](#), it states that to make sure "no one is left behind, we need to ensure

that our young people are equipped with the skills to thrive in the digital world".

Other programmes, like [#NotWithoutMe](#) led by [Carnegie UK Trust](#) are seeking to address the digital inclusion challenges of vulnerable young people. In terms of addressing barriers to use, agencies like [AbilityNet](#) provide support to enable disabled people make better use of the internet, such as on issues like dyslexia.

"We need to ensure that our young people are equipped with the skills to thrive in the digital world."



Want to read more?

- 1** Scottish Government, 2021. A Changing Nation: How Scotland Will Thrive In A Digital World. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-changing-nation-how-scotland-will-thrive-in-a-digital-world/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 2** Pawluczuk, A., 2020. Digital youth inclusion and the big data divide: examining the Scottish perspective. Internet Policy Review. Available at: <https://policyreview.info/articles/analysis/digital-youth-inclusion-and-big-data-divide-examining-scottish-perspective> (Accessed: November 2022)

- 3** Good Things Foundation, 2021. Digital exclusion and health inequalities – Briefing paper. Available at: <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/digital-exclusion-and-health-inequalities/> (Accessed: November 2022)
- 4** Carnegie UK Trust, 2017. #NotWithoutMe – A digital world for all? Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/digitalworld> (Accessed: November 2022)



8. Conclusion: Starting your journey

Learning a new skill can feel daunting, especially when it means approaching a new and fast-moving area like digital in a sensitive context like mental health. The perceived lack of organisational support can add to the difficulty. However, whether we like it or not, digital technologies are here to stay. It is widely used by young people – with or without our support. The more we wait to get on this fast-moving train, the more we will need to catch up. Not only that, but the more young people will have used digital technologies like social media without professional support in the context of mental health.

So, where do you start? In this final chapter, we're proposing a digital journey, which people who come in contact with young people can use to get started. Feel free to pick what you need or add your own ideas.

1. Find a partner
2. Self-reflect
3. Do your research
4. What are your organisation's requirements?
5. Start a conversation with young people
6. Connect with the experts
7. Try out social media
8. Try using digital tools

1. Find a partner

If you're starting this journey on your own, it's easy to feel discouraged and daunted. Look around you. Is there anyone who shows a level of interest in exploring innovative approaches to promote mental health in young people? It might be inside your organisation or outside. They might be uneasy about digital but prepared to overcome their resistance if it benefits the young people they work with.

You might want to consider coming along to one of our [Aye Mind](#) events to meet like-minded people.

“The more we wait to get on this fast-moving train, the more we will need to catch up.”

2. Self-reflect

Establishing a regular self-reflection practice helps you translate what you learn into action and embed it in your everyday working life. Here are some pointers to help you self-reflect about exploring digital approaches to support youth mental wellbeing:

- How do you feel about talking about mental health with young people?
- How do you feel engaging with digital tools?

Try to place yourself on an imaginary scale.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you hate technology and believe it has no place in the area of mental health? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you resistant and afraid of engaging with digital and/or mental health? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you hoping that digital offers an avenue to be explored, but not sure how to engage? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you willing to learn about digital, about mental health and how the two interact? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you growing confident about using digital in general? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you growing confident about using digital to promote youth mental wellbeing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you consider yourself a bit of digi-evangelist? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you consider yourself a professional in this field? |

- How comfortable are you with social media?
- What digital tools do you use in your personal life?
- Why and how do you use these digital tools? The Online Lives chapter might help you explore this area.

Want to read more?

1 Open University, n.d. Self-reflection. Available at: <https://www.open.ac.uk/choose/unison/develop/my-skills/self-reflection> (Accessed: November 2022)

3. Do your research

With online technologies being used on a daily basis in today's world and digital resources being designed to meet specific needs, it's vital to identify digital resources and technologies and recognise how they may be of benefit to you now and how they might help young people you work with.

It all starts with doing your research. We recommend that you have a look at the further reading we have highlighted in each section of this toolkit to expand your knowledge.

We also recommend that you have a look through our [Aye Mind website](#), which includes practical guides about how other organisations have been using digital tools to support young people's mental health and wellbeing. In this fast-moving field, learning from each other is key.

The useful tools section of the website is another good place to start exploring examples of digital approaches to youth mental wellbeing. You can also submit new resources that you will find during your research so that others can benefit too.

4. What are your organisation's requirements?

Social media and digital approaches in general present challenges to organisations working with young people. Your organisation most likely has some policies, procedures or requirements. We cannot stress enough how important it is to find them and to read them carefully.

Although many professionals find that they are restrictive in allowing them to engage with young people, you might find that you have more scope than you think. You might also want to consider challenging them if you see opportunities to engage safely.

Here are five easy and practical steps that might help you overcome challenges you might be facing in your organisation around using technology:

1. Innovating with what you already have – this might include some small changes of how you already use something or getting to know something you didn't know before
2. Seek out free online guides and tutorials on how to use existing technologies you have
3. Overcoming the fear of the unknown – talk to colleagues and share your thoughts, look at how other people are already using social media for youth work
4. Try out different things, see what you feel more comfortable with
5. Learn with young people – listen and learn how they use social media.

We would also like to offer another perspective: engaging with young people around digital and social media doesn't all have to be done online. It's about starting a conversation from a point of view of knowledge and understanding. It can be about relating to their experiences and – if needed – connect them with the expert and the advice they need.

5. Start a conversation with young people

Understanding what digital tools young people in general use is only a starting point. It is key to understand what the young people you work with use and how they use these tools. It's then when we gain a deeper understanding of how people behave and why.

For example, in an 18-month long ethnographic study on social media use in an English village, the researcher showed that focusing on most popular websites such as Facebook and Instagram does little to explain what we post on them (Miller, 2016). The understanding came from spending time with people who post on these platforms, observing their behaviour, and listening to them.

To support you to have these conversations, you could try asking a young person to create a made-up 'persona' of an imaginary young person. It can feel less intrusive to talk about a persona than to talk about yourself. Try to get them to fill in as much detail as possible, imagine what their family might be like, where he/she might live, what's on their mind...

Once they have done that, young people can then select the devices and social media channels that their persona might use – Instagram? Snapchat? TikTok? From there, get them to start building the story of how their persona might use these tools. Try encouraging them to build the story – it's in this rich detail that you will find the insights you need about their views and experiences.

This exercise will help you better understand the challenges that the young people you work with face and provide some support.

6. Connect with the experts

Digital and social media are such vast and fast moving landscapes that no one can ever be an expert in all aspects. However, there are other ways the adults who live and work with young people can fit in and provide support.

If you are an expert in a particular area, you could consider expanding your knowledge to include the online counterpart of your expertise.

Respect Me for example, “work with all adults involved in the lives of children and young people to give them the practical skills and confidence to deal with children who are bullied and those who bully others.” Bullying is bullying, whether it happens online or in the school playground – and people might need support through a variety of channels, online and in person. The support Respect Me offer therefore encompasses both the online and offline elements.

The Internet and social media are also powerful assets to help you identify and connect with the experts in the area your young people are struggling with. You will find [on our website](#) helpful Guides around practical steps to follow to use digital tools to give you inspiration. You will also find our ‘Digital Tools’ page which includes organisations, websites, apps and campaigns who can provide information and support in the area of mental health and wellbeing. It is a good place to start to find extra support.

7. Try out social media

Social media is also a good place to keep abreast of new development in the area of digital approaches for youth mental health. You can use Twitter for example to find and follow the experts. You will see their updates, links, articles and research they have found interesting. You don’t even have to give your real name or participate; you can simply ‘follow’ the people you’re interested in.

“The Internet and social media are powerful assets to help you identify and connect with experts.”

First steps on Twitter



Sign up for a Twitter account - it's easy!



Check out #AyeMind to see what people are saying about the project



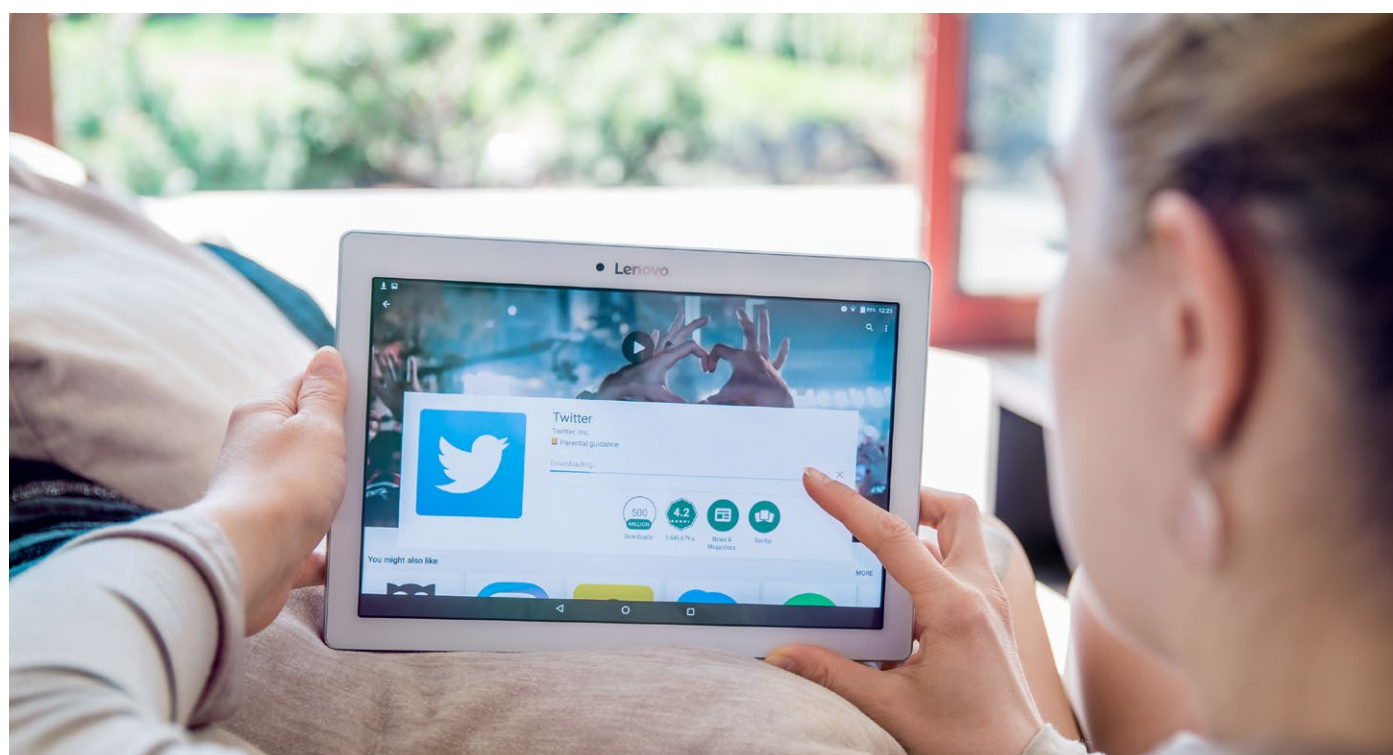
Make a space every day to have a scan of the tweets in your timeline. Try following a link or two. If there is a hashtag at the next conference you go to, have a look.



Read a few links of interest, forward links to colleagues, follow new people and retweet them.

Pick some accounts to follow:
If you want to find out about mental health, try these:

- > **Aye Mind**
@AyeMind99
- > **NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde**
@NHSGGC
- > **Mental Health Foundation**
@mentalhealth
- > **Young Scot**
@YoungScot
- > **See Me**
@seemescotland
- > **SAMH**
@SAMHtweets
- > **Young Minds**
@YoungMinds
- > **Samaritans**
@Samaritans



8. Try out digital tools

There are several sites that include guides to the social networks that young people use, such as the [UK Safer Internet Centre's Social Media Guides page](#). These help parents and professionals stay up to date with a variety of social media sites, their safety features, and advice.

Do you feel ready to try out a digital tool? We can help out – just follow the steps on the image below. And remember to [stay critical but curious](#).

Digital Tools: Your first steps

1 – Look up an app/tool

Look up apps/tools you have heard of from young people or in the media.

2 – Share with colleagues

Ask your colleagues to find an app and think about what challenges and opportunities it might bring up for young people's mental wellbeing.

3 – Findings

Ask your colleagues to present their findings at the next available team session.

4 – Brainstorm

Have a brainstorm session with young people about tools they've heard of or used. See whether their experiences are similar to what sites like the UK Safer Internet Centre's Social Media Guides say.

5 – Try it

Download an app you haven't used before and try it out for two weeks, using it regularly. Think about how it might fit with mental health.

9. Get in touch with us

Aye Mind has been developed by the Mental Health Improvement Team at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. If you have any questions about this toolkit or the Aye Mind project more generally, get in touch:

Website: www.ayemind.com

Twitter: [@AyeMind99](https://twitter.com/AyeMind99)

Email: ggc.mhead@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

10. References

- 1** Childwise, 2020. Childhood 2020: New Independent Report. Available at: http://www.childwise.co.uk/uploads/3/1/6/5/31656353/childwise_press_release_-_monitor_2020_-_immediate_release.pdf (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 2** DataReportal, 2022. Digital 2022: Global overview Report. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 3** Gambling Commission, 2022. Young People and Gambling 2022. Available at: <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/report/young-people-and-gambling-2022/ypg-2022-executive-summary-headline-statistics> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 4** McGorry et al, 2013. Designing youth mental health services for the 21st century: examples from Australia, Ireland and the UK. British Journal of Psychiatry. Available at: <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/202/s54/s30.full.pdf+html> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 5** Mental Health Foundation, n.d. Children and Young People Statistics. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/children-young-people-statistics> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 6** Mental Health Foundation, 2016. The Fundamental Facts about Mental Health. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/The-Fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2016.pdf> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 7** Miller, D., 2016. Social Media in an English Village. Available at: <https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/83101> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 8** Nominet, 2022. Digital Youth Index. Available at: https://digitalyouthindex.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Digital_Youth_Index_Year_2.pdf?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=Referral&utm_campaign=DYI_Report_2022&utm_content=DYI_Report_2022_referral (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 9** NSPCC, 2016. A quantitative and qualitative examination of the impact of online pornography on the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of children and young people. Available at: https://www.mdx.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/223266/MDX-NSPCC-OCC-pornography-report.pdf (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 10** Ofcom, 2022. Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report 2022. Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/234609/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2022.pdf (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 11** Office for National Statistics, 2019. Exploring the UK's digital divide. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 12** Respect Me, 2014. Bullying in Scotland 2014. Available at: <https://respectme.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Bullying-in-Scotland-2014-SUMMARY-REPORT-FINAL-PDF.pdf> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 13** Samaritans, 2020. Hidden Too Long: uncovering Self-Harm in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/samaritans-in-scotland/about-samaritans-scotland/campaigning-change-scotland/reducing-self-harm/self-harm-scotland/> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 14** Scottish Government, 2021. Digital Health and Care Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-digital-health-care-strategy/> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 15** See Me, n.d. Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination and Young People. Available at: <https://www.seemescotland.org/young-people/> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 16** Staksrud et al., 2013. In their own words: what bothers children online? [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48357/1/In their own words \(Isero\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48357/1/In%20their%20own%20words%20(Isero).pdf) (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 17** Third, A., and Richardson, I., 2010. Connecting, supporting and empowering young people living with chronic illness and disability. Available online: <https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:48011/> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 18** Wies, B., Landers, C., Ienca, M., 2021. Digital Mental Health for Young People: A Scoping Review of Ethical Promises and Challenges. Front Digit Health. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fdgth.2021.697072/full> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 19** World Health Organisation, 2021. Adolescent Mental Health – Key Facts. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health> (Accessed: Nov 2022)
- 20** Young and Well CRC, 2014. Advice on Innovative Technologies in e-Mental Health: Briefing Paper for the National Mental Health Commission. Available at: <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20160405063711/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/141862/20160405-1343/www.youngandwellcra.org.au/knowledge-hub/publications/advice-on-innovative-technologies-in-e-mental-health/index.html> (Accessed: Nov 2022)



aye mind

Website: www.ayemind.com

Twitter: @AyeMind99

Email: ggc.mhead@ggc.scot.nhs.uk