

# Working Together to Support Children Online

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# Introduction

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# Smartphones and Social Media

- Two very separate issues but one naturally leads to the other.
- Government are currently deciding on the best course of action
- Not clear how the DfE are going to implement the Government decision
- No guidance for schools has been published yet



# Smartphones

- Designed to be **addictive**
- Access to the **World in their hands** and vice versa (adult content)
- Apps are designed to **attention grab** and distract
- Lowers attention span and causes **attention fragmentation** due to constant switching between tasks
- Degrades **sleep** quality (learning takes place during sleep)
- Impairs learning- multitasking with a smartphone during academic work causes **lower overall productivity**



# Social Media

**-Mental Health & Self-Esteem:** Constant exposure to highly curated, unrealistic lifestyles and bodies creates a breeding ground for low self-esteem and body dysmorphia. Studies indicate that heavy use is strongly linked to heightened rates of anxiety and depression.

**-Addiction & Time Displacement:** Platforms use algorithms, infinite scrolling, and notification alerts to trigger dopamine hits, leading to compulsive screen time that distracts from real-life relationships, schoolwork, and physical activities.

**-Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** The constant visibility into other people's activities creates a persistent anxiety that you are being excluded, which compels users to stay glued to their screens.



# Social Media

**-Cyberbullying & Harassment:** The anonymity of the internet can embolden individuals to spread rumours, harass, or verbally attack others, which can have devastating psychological consequences for vulnerable users.

**-Misinformation & Echo Chambers:** Algorithms are designed to maximize engagement, often locking users into echo chambers and surfacing sensationalised, fake news much faster than accurate information

**-Grooming:** messaging features on most apps/games put young people at risk. Grooming can happen to everyone.

**-WhatsApp causes the biggest and most worrying issues in school.**



# Girls and Boys and Social Media

## Girls

- Vulnerable
- Social hierarchy-connections and influence/perfectionism
- Dominate social space- think 'Mean Girls'
- Relational aggression-destroy reputation/relationships. Social Media fuels this and affects mental health
- Empathy-feel each others pain. Share emotions easier-contagious.
- Most popular girl gets the most likes-copy behaviour
- Self harm



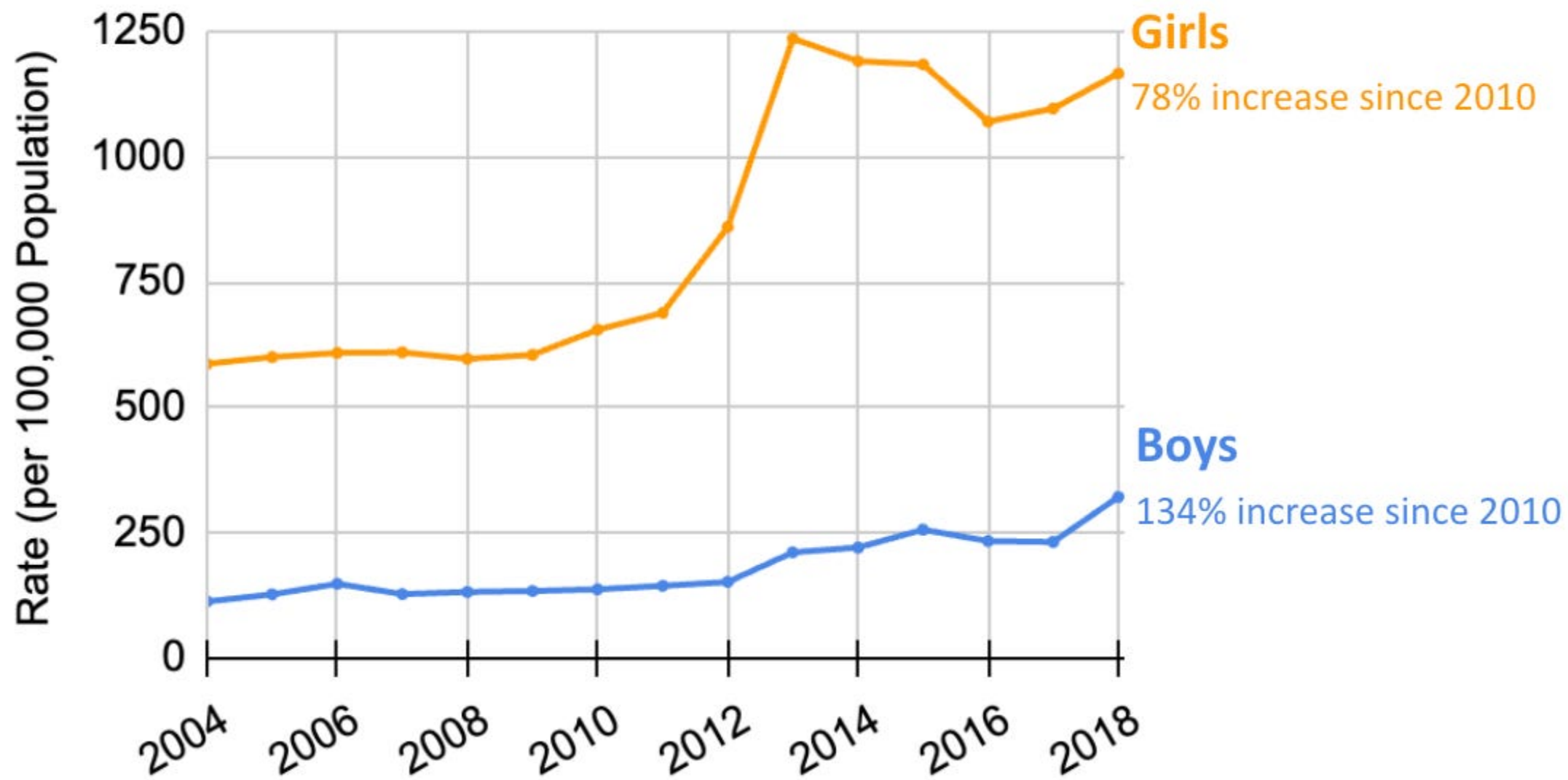
# Girls and Boys and Social Media

## Boys

- Dominance hierarchy- alpha male. Who is the best footballer, gamer, athlete? Who is the strongest? Seen as role models.
- Physical aggression- competitiveness
- Higher on systemising, weaker on empathy
- Gaming facilitates all of the above
- Drawn to physical things
- Curious/like problem solving: porn



# UK Teens, Self-harm Episodes (Ages 13-16)



# The Basics

- Do not share passwords/username
- Do not give out personal details to unknown people
- Do not arrange to meet people in person who have been met online
- Do not share images with unknown people
- Do not share name and details of school to unknown people
- Do not share address to unknown people
- Do not download unknown files



# At Home

- It is good practice to monitor what your child uses their devices for.
- Try and develop a relationship with your child so that they feel they can talk to you about their online activity. What you want to prevent is them hiding it from you-they are very clever!
- Invasion of privacy?
- Software allows you to track/limit usage-do what works for you
- Children should not have devices in their room at night.
- Router settings can be changed and modified to restrict and monitor usage.
- Set boundaries and make them clear.
- Co-Parenting; are your expectations the same?



## Setting up parental controls on:

Home broadband and WiFi



Games consoles



Mobiles, tablets and computers



Apps and online services



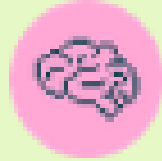
Search engines



WiFi and being away from home



- [nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/](https://nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/)



# Mental illness

Rates of depression, anxiety and suicide in young people have spiked globally since 2010, when children first began getting smartphones. The first generation to grow up with smartphones are now adults – data shows that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.

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# Age Limits Are There For a Reason!

13+

12+

9+

7+

16+



# WhatsApp

Age Rating: 13+

Biggest Concern: Group chats

Risk: Mental health  
Grooming  
Child on child abuse  
View once feature



# Snap Chat

Age Rating: 13+

Biggest Concern: Images that disappear, stories, chats.

Risk: Predatory Behaviour  
Risk taking  
Coercive behaviour



# TikTok

Age Rating: 13+

Biggest Concern: exposure to inappropriate content

Risk: Normalising certain behaviours

Predatory Behaviour

Poor self image/worth

Extremism on the rise

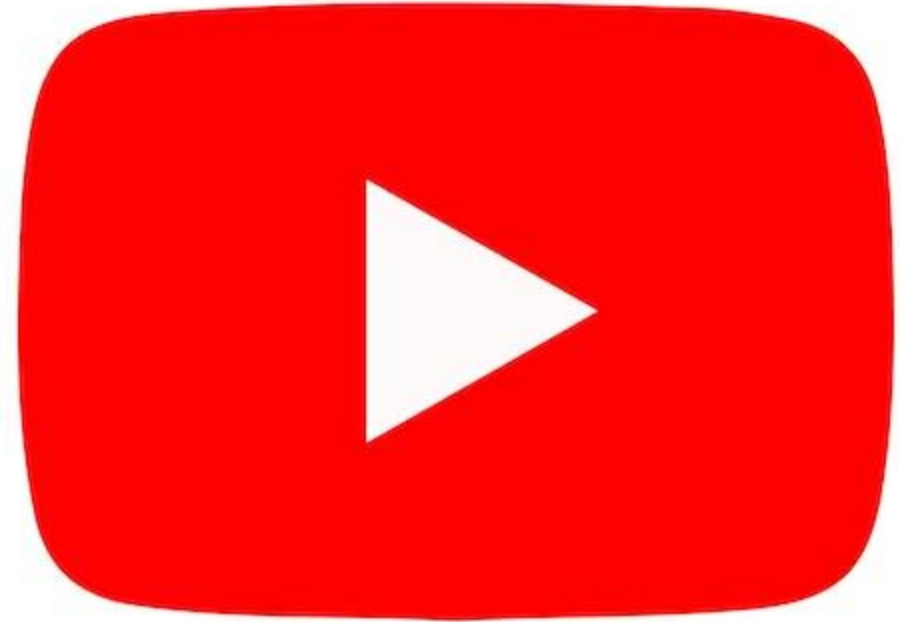


# You Tube

Age Rating: 13+

Biggest Concern: Inappropriate material

Risk: Need to be liked, addictive, connects with potential groomers



# Fortnite

Age Rating: 12+

Biggest Concern: Addiction

Risks: Grooming

Fraud

Violence

Always online



# Minecraft

Age Rating: 7+

Biggest Concern: Interaction with strangers through chat function

Risks: Content creators on YouTube

Addictive

Public server



# Roblox

Age Rating: 7+

Biggest Concern: 'Oders'

Risk: Grooming  
Contact with strangers  
Chat function



# Other Apps/Concerns

- Discord
- Omoggle
- Pinterest
- Spotify
- Cyber Flashing or being shown Porn by friends
- FaceTime/video calling





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