Social Media and Mental Health
Content of the session

- Key themes from the literature
- Emerging data
#StatusOfMind
Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing
Social media and children’s mental health: a review of the evidence

Emily Frith
June 2017
16-24 age group are the most active users of social media.

Adolescence and early adulthood is a critical and potentially vulnerable time for social and emotional development.

Research suggests that young people who spend more than two hours per day on social networking sites are more likely to report poor mental health, including psychological distress.

‘Compare and despair’ attitude in young people.

Numerous studies have shown that increased social media use has a significant association with poor sleep quality in young people.
Body image

- Studies have shown that when young girls and women in their teens and early twenties view Facebook for only a short period of time, body image concerns are higher compared to non-users.
- Body comparisons
- Rise in younger generations opting to have cosmetic surgery to look better in photos, due to social media
- Low body-esteem, leading to body surveillance
- Males are also affected
Cyberbullying

- Seven in 10 young people have experienced cyberbullying, with 37% of young people saying they experience cyberbullying frequently.
- Victims of bullying are more likely to experience low academic performance, depression, anxiety, self-harm, feelings of loneliness and changes in sleeping and eating patterns.
Fear of missing out

- FoMO has been robustly linked to higher levels of social media engagement
- Can lead to anxiety
- Can lead to sleep deprivation
- Can make people feel their life is inadequate compared to others
Other issues

- Live streaming – self-harm; suicide
- Time spent online has been associated with a decline in academic achievement
- Each additional hour of viewing increases the likelihood of experiencing socio-emotional problems
Methodology

- Focus groups – 13 to 18 year olds (50 young people)
- Survey (500 young people)
Emerging themes (positives)

- Social media as a source of support
- Social media as a form of communication
- Social media as a form of entertainment
- Social media as a way of connecting with others
- A way of getting compliments
- Useful for business
Emerging themes (negatives)

- It affects your body image
- It makes you feel jealous
- Cyber bullying
- Sleep deprivation
- It causes pressure
- Fake pictures
Ways forward

- Digital citizenship / digital responsibility
- Digital resilience
- Digital literacy
- Parents
- Social media companies
- Schools
Whole school approach

School Mental Health Award – Leeds Beckett University

- SchoolMH@leedsbeckett.ac.uk