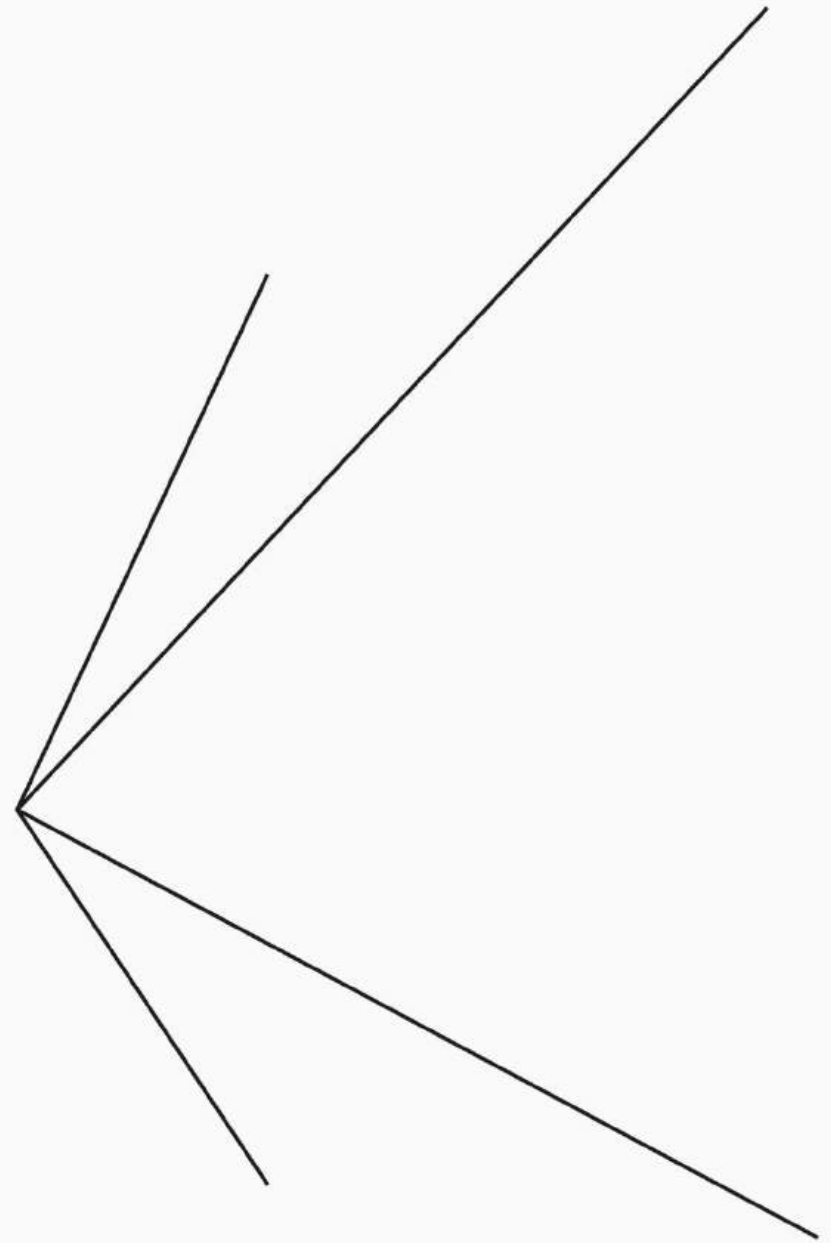


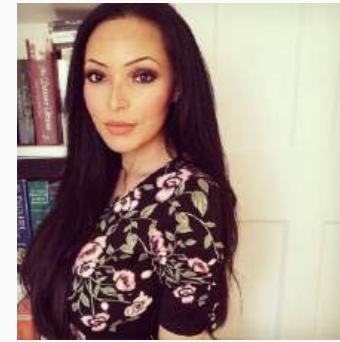
# Media Literacy and Mental Health

Professor Ruth Page  
University of Birmingham

Content note: Slide 7 mentions Eating Disorder content



# Influencer Stories of Mental Health and Young People



Economic and Social Research  
Council  
2024-2026



Our team of researchers,  
Young People's Advisory  
Group and Project Partners



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McPin  
Foundation

Transforming  
mental health  
research



Aston University  
BIRMINGHAM UK



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council



University of  
Nottingham  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# What do you need to know?

One in three young people use social media  
for mental health support (Stem4, 2023)



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# What is mental health literacy?



The ability to recognise mental health conditions;



Knowledge of how, when and where to seek help;



Knowing how to gain positive mental health;



Promoting positive attitudes towards mental health care.



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► [BMC Public Health](#). 2020 May 1;20:607. doi: [10.1186/s12889-020-08734-1](#)

**A systematic literature review of existing conceptualisation and measurement of mental health literacy in adolescent research: current challenges and inconsistencies**

[Rosie Mansfield](#)<sup>1,✉</sup>, [Praveetha Patalay](#)<sup>2</sup>, [Neil Humphrey](#)<sup>1</sup>

# Misleading content about mental health

Reductive descriptions of mental health symptoms:

“3 signs of narcissism in a parent”

“Antidepressant dupes”

Blurring normal emotional responses and diagnostic language

Anxiety, depression, trauma, OCD

Inaccurate information about solutions

“I really like SAME because it actually increases gene expression”



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**Biologists warn against toxic SAME  
'health' supplement**

Substance marketed online to ease range of joint and liver conditions, and to promote wellbeing, should not be used

# Harmful help?

Personal stories of mental health challenges can provide peer support, but everyone's experience is different.

Recovery accounts: aspirational role models or triggering?

Day in the life of a psych ward: reassuring or risky?

**Young people need socio-emotional media literacy skills to evaluate the right content for them, right now.**



# What is the impact of design?

...A lot of impulsiveness, rather than having to weigh it all

It takes a few seconds to get up the screen, you're still hearing like 'so I weigh this many kilos' and then it's like, shut up. Oh my God.



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Quotes from focus group participants

TikTok's features	Click count
Scrolling past	1
'Like' or 'Save'	2
'Searching'	2 + Active input
'Not interested'	3
Checking profiles	3 +
'Schedule a break'	5
'Open TikTok on mute'	5
'Refresh your feed'	6
'Report a problem'	6 + Active input
Turn on 'restricted mode'	7

# Practical steps

Creating conversational contexts to increase critical thinking about this topic.



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# A youth-led approach

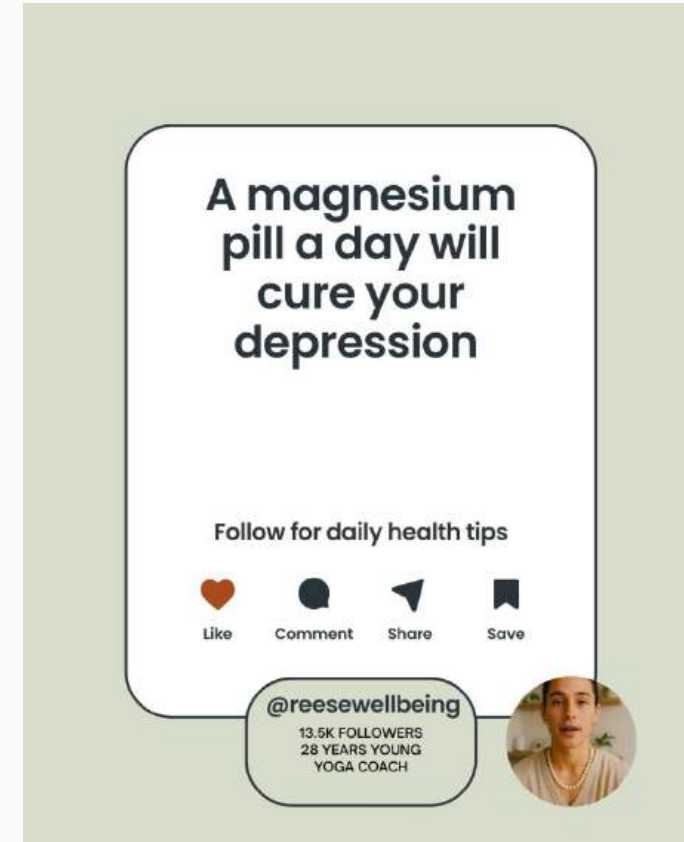
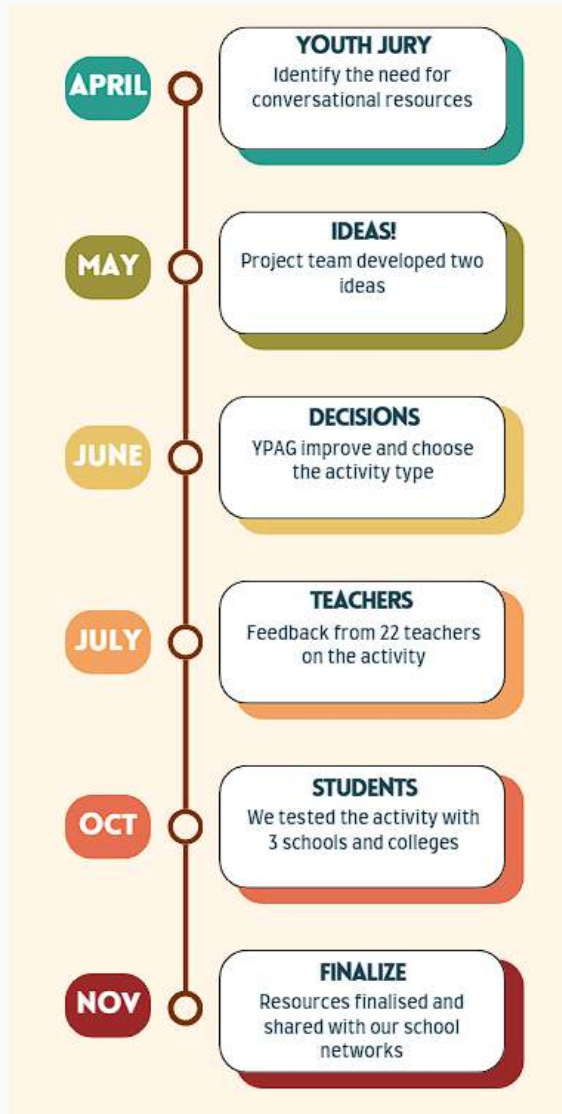
“That's why we ask education providers to work with young people, to develop learning resources that are conversational, relevant, engaging and focus on how we consume as well as how we respond to the content out there.”

Influencer Stories Youth Jury  
April 2025



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# Introducing 'Scroll Smart'

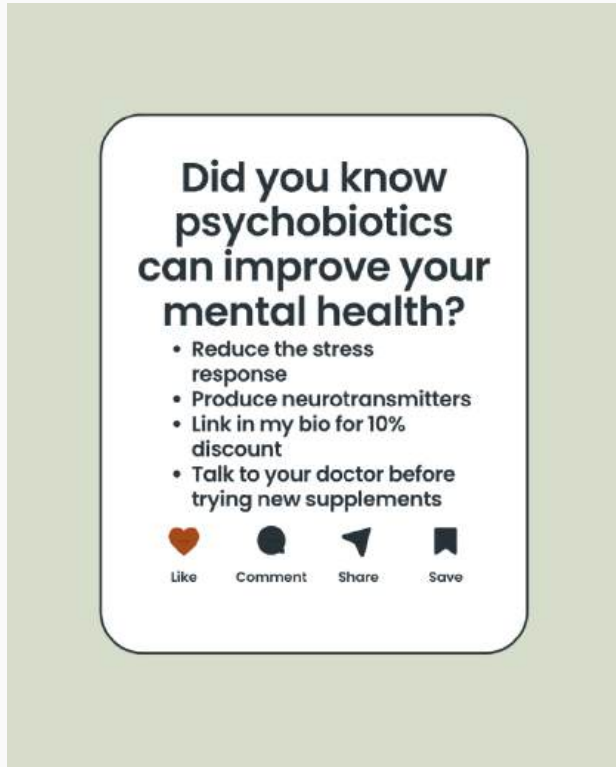


Credits: *Emma Garavini, Eva Asiedu-Addo, Michael Larkin, Shioma-Lei Craythorne, Ruth Page and the Influencer Stories YPAG*



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# Sample cards with voting tools and questions



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Credits: *Emma Garavini, Eva Asiedu-Addo, Michael Larkin, Shioma-Lei Craythorne, Ruth Page and the Influencer Stories YPAG*

# Media + mental health literacy

Critical thinking	Information	Attitudes	Help-seeking What next?
Content	Is this content accurate or believable?	How does this represent conditions and people?	What support do I or other people need?
People	Is this person credible? What is their bias?	How is this affecting my emotions?	What evidence is there for the recommendation?
Action	How far does this apply to me or others?	What is the design encouraging me to do? Is that helpful?	Do I need to take further action about this content?
Design features	How do I: Search, (de)select content, Identify the right sites to verify information	What am I using this site for?	Where I can I check: Safety skills Reporting content Setting limits

Credits:  
*Emma Garavini, Eva Asiedu-Addo, Michael Larkin, Shioma-Lei Craythorne, Ruth Page and the Influencer Stories YPAG*



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# The free educational pack will include

Short, expert videos introducing

- Mental health literacy
- Misinformation
- Influencers

Lesson plans for PSHE










PPT slides

The game and instructions for play

Teacher's handbook

Customisable templates

Worksheet version of the game

<p><b>Session 1</b></p>  <p>Big Idea</p>  <p>Details</p>  <p>Unanswered Questions</p>  <p>Language of the Discipline</p>	<p><b>LI: critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content</b>  <b>LI: understand that there are positive and safe ways to create and share content online and the opportunities this offers</b></p> <p>Introduce misinformation and why it matters for mental health          3–5-minute video supplied + PPT slides</p> <p>This first session introduces students to the terminology around influencers and why misinformation matters for mental health.</p> <p>Brainstorm what the students already know and understand around influencers. This discussion might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do they understand as an influencer?</li> <li>• Why does someone want to be an influencer?</li> <li>• Why do we need to be careful of what we view by influencers?</li> <li>• What are the implications of our online actions from following these influencers?</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">PPT Slides</a></p> <p><a href="#">Video supplied</a></p>
<p><b>Session 2</b></p>  <p>Big Idea</p>  <p>Multiple Perspectives</p>  <p>Details</p>  <p>Language of the Discipline</p>  <p>Ethics</p>	<p><b>LI: critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content</b></p> <p>Review the discussion from the previous lesson, go on to explain the game that will be used to unpack the themes and discussion around critically assessing digital content.</p> <p>Explain that they will be playing a game in small groups. Before they play the game fully, they will be looking at different aspects of the cards.</p> <p>In this session they will choose a scenario card at random from the draw pile and take part in a discussion around whether the scenario is harmful or helpful. They can then ask questions to find out more.</p> <p><b>Introducing the game:</b>          Begin by looking at the different scenarios. Students can work in small groups to organise the cards into whether they are helpful or harmful. (Some scenarios may sit between helpful and harmful).</p> <p>Use the question tokens to promote discussion with the students. Encourage students to critically analyse whether a scenario is valid, the authenticity and accuracy of what is being presented.</p> <p>Encourage students to look at the scenarios from different perspectives to see how the scenario can be interpreted differently.</p>	<p><a href="#">Scenario cards</a></p> <p><a href="#">Helpful, harmful, and question tokens</a></p>



# How to stay up to date



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# Youth-led organisations: updates on LinkedIn

Spark UK: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/spark-uk/>

Young Minds: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/youngminds/>

The Mix: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-mix-charity/>

Anna Freud Centre: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/anna-freud-centre/>



# Updates to Safety Centres and Companies

[TikTok's newsroom](#) has a 'Safety' tab

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/kids-and-teens/>

Snapchat's [safety centre](#) and [family safety hub](#)

Internet Matters

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/internet-matters/posts/?feedView=all>

Shout Out UK

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/shoutoutuk/posts/?feedView=all>

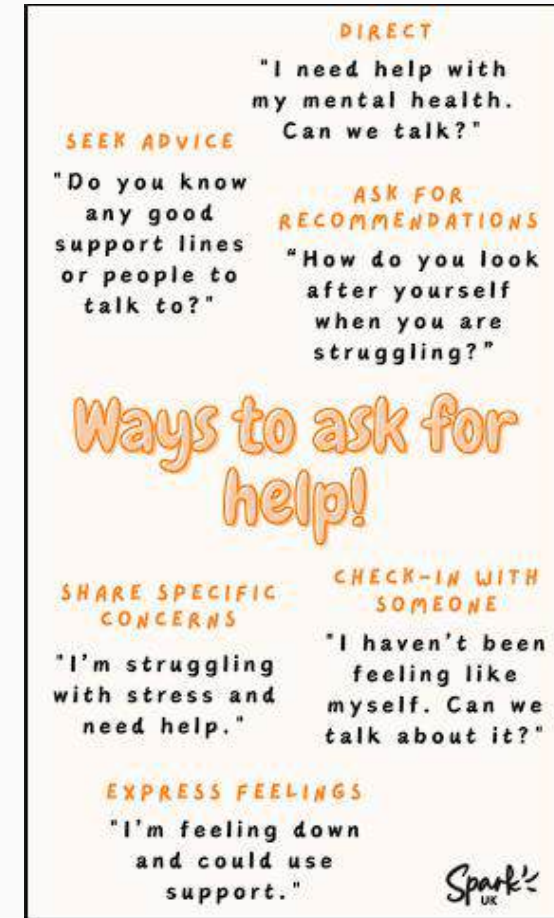


# In school support

It's still hard for young people to talk to talk to their peers, teachers and families about mental health struggles.

If you invite students to seek help within schools, tell them exactly how to do that (e.g. via email or Teams). In person visits to offices can be tricky.

Use your wellbeing officers and youth councils to lead educational initiatives.



# What's next?

After this event we will send you a copy of the recording for you to revisit and reuse.

We would love to send you our resources!

We are holding a FREE project showcase with talks from spoken word artists, young people and influencers at the University of Birmingham, Wednesday 25 March, 2026 (3-6pm)



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Influencer Stories Project - Mental  
Health Literacy

