

App social media usage evaluation

Research Project Information for Parents/Carers

Dear Parent/Carer,

From November 2025 - May 2026, your child's school is taking part in a research project to help young people reduce their social media use. In this project, we will test the effectiveness of a free smartphone app designed to help young people to spend less time on social media.

Below, we describe why we are doing this research project, and what is involved for your child. Please read the information carefully and keep this sheet for future reference. If you decide that you do NOT want to be involved in this project or for your child to be involved in the research, then please complete and return the slip at the end of this letter to your child's school by Friday 24th October 2025.

If you are happy for your child to be involved in this research project, you do not have to do anything.

If you change your mind later, you are free to withdraw your child from this project at any time by using the contact details at the end of this letter. If you contact us after your child has completed a survey, we will not be able to delete their responses, as all surveys are anonymous, and we will not be able to identify them.

What does this project involve?

There is evidence that too much social media use can harm young people's wellbeing and learning.

The goal of the research is to examine the impact of a free smartphone app in reducing social media use and improving pupil wellbeing for pupils in Years 9 and 10 in UK schools.

Between November 2025 - May 2026, pupils in Year 9 and 10 at over 40 participating schools in the UK will be given the opportunity to download and use the app. The app helps young people to reduce their social media use by encouraging them to set usage goals with their peers and rewarding them for spending less time scrolling.

A pilot study conducted in the US found the app **helped users reduce their scroll time by 50%** and **improved life satisfaction by 16%**.

Schools will **not** be asked to set aside learning time to participate in the project.

Who is undertaking the research?

The research is being led by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), and is being funded by the innovation charity Nesta. The evaluation has been reviewed and approved by the BIT Research Ethics Committee.

The headteacher of your child's school has agreed that the school will take part in the research project. This is an indication of their interest in supporting research to improve pupil wellbeing. It does not mean that the school has a problem with social media usage.

How will the project work?

The research will run in over 40 UK schools between November 2025 and May 2026 (though most schools will finish up by February 2026).

The research is a type of study called a randomised controlled trial. This means that participating schools will be randomly allocated to one of the following three groups:

1. In **group 1**, all pupils in Year 9 and 10 will be encouraged to use the app in this (2025/26) school year.
2. In **group 2**, a group of 10 - 20 pupils in Year 9 and 10 (referred to as the 'Change Makers') will work together to introduce the app to other pupils in their year groups in this (2025/26) school year.

The 'Change Makers' will be selected by your child's school, based on who they believe would be most likely to encourage their peers to download and use the app.

If your child is selected to be invited to be a 'Change Maker', your child's school will write to you to explain what participating would entail and to ask your permission for your child to be involved.

3. In **group 3**, all pupils in Year 9 and 10 will be encouraged to use the app later in this (2025/26) school year.

Researchers will compare outcomes including pupil life satisfaction and social media usage between these groups. They will also compare these outcomes for schools where staff are the ones introducing the app to pupils, versus when the app is introduced by other pupils. This is the best way to understand the effects of the app and the best way to encourage young people to use it.

What does this mean for me as a parent/carer?

As part of measuring the impact of the app on pupil wellbeing and social media usage, pupils in Years 9 and 10 will be asked to complete two short **anonymous** surveys in November 2025, and in February 2026. The surveys will ask pupils about

- Their sense of wellbeing (life satisfaction, sense of distraction, sleep quality)

- Their social media usage (time spent on social media).
- Their school and year group
- Their gender

Each of the two surveys will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

No information that could identify your child (such as name, date of birth, or address/postcode) will be collected as part of the survey or shared with BIT by your child's school.

A small number of pupils will be invited to take part in short **voluntary** interviews in Spring 2026, to discuss their reflections on using the app and the way it was introduced to them. These interviews will be led by trained DBS-checked researchers at BIT. Parents/carers will be asked for their explicit permission for their child to take part in one of these interviews.

In addition to this, parents/carers will also be invited to take part in a single short (5 minute) **voluntary** survey in Spring 2026, asking about wellbeing and social media usage among their child(ren). Parents/carers who complete this survey, will be entered into a lottery to win a £200 voucher as a thank you for taking part. Parents/carers may also be invited to take part in a short **voluntary** follow-up online interview with a researcher from BIT, to discuss social media usage among young people. Participants in this follow-up voluntary interview will be given a £40 voucher as a thank you for their time.

Neither your name, your child's name nor the name of the school will be used in any report arising from the research, and no information that could otherwise identify you or your child will be made public.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions you would like to ask about data processing or the evaluation, or if you would like to withdraw your child from the evaluation at a later date, please contact us at socialmedia@bi.team. If you contact us after your child has completed a survey, we will not be able to delete their responses, as all surveys are anonymous, and we will not be able to identify them.

App Evaluation

This is an important project that we think will help improve young people's wellbeing and social media habits.

If you are happy for your child to participate, you DO NOT need to do anything but please keep this form for your information.

If you **DO NOT** want your child to take part, please fill in the form below, sign and return to your child's school by Friday 3rd November 2025.

I **DO NOT** wish for my child to be involved in the research to reduce social media use.

Child's name	
Date of birth	
School year / class	
Parent/carer name	
Parent/carer signature	
Date	