Online Harms
and
Mental Health

Overview

- What are online harms?

- Types of online harm

- Statistics

- How online harms impact mental health

- How can we support?

- Looking after yourself

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What are online harms?

The UK government defines online harms as:

Either online content that is created by someone, or someone's online behaviour, that could cause significant physical or psychological harm to a person.

Types of online harms

- Child sexual exploitation and abuse
- Terrorist use of the internet
- Hate crime and hate speech
- Harassment and cyberstalking
- Cyberbullying and online abuse
- Online scams

- Sexual exploitation and abuse
- Sale of illegal drugs and weapons
- Online gambling-related harms
- Misinformation/ Disinformation
- Promotion of eating disorders, self-harm, or suicide

Statistics

- Almost three quarters (71%) of users 13+ in Scotland have encountered one potential harm online recently.

- Young adults aged 18-24 are more likely than other age groups to have experienced harm online (80%).

- Minority ethnic communities aged 13+ are more likely than White users of the same age to have experienced harms online (71% vs 67%).

- Teenage girls are more likely then boys to have experienced harm online (73% vs 66%).

- LGBTQ+ users are more likely than heterosexual users to experience harm online (84% vs 66%).

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Statistics

- 24% of 18 to 29 year olds have experienced mental or emotional stress as a result of online harassment.

- 55% of women said they had experienced stress, anxiety or panic attacks after experiencing online abuse or harassment.

- Users from an ethnic minority background were significantly more likely to report the greatest negative impact from online harm (25% vs 14%).

- In a study with 2,218 secondary students in the UK, 35% of those presenting with PTSD symptoms were 'cyber victims'.

Impact of online harms

- Mental health impacts
- Low self-esteem
- Increases in suicidal thoughts or attempt
- Loneliness
- Financial losses

- Withdrawing from social interactions
- Substance abuse
- Impact on work or school
- Impact on sleep

How can we support?

Individual

- Talking
- Digital literacy
- Peer support
- Support healthy digital habits
- Report harmful content
- Signpost to appropriate support

Society

- Safer Internet Day, CyberScotland Week, Screen-Free Week
- Develop workforce's digital skills and understanding
- Policies – Online Safety Bill, Internet Safety for Children and Young People: National Action Plan

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Looking after yourself

Things I can do

………by myself

………with others

People I can talk to…….