



# Digital Bulletin – Social Media & News

The Internet is a hugely valuable resource and provides information on any subject at the click of a button. It has changed the way we live our lives, from searching cinema showing times and travel information to news headlines with notifications given as soon as a story breaks. However, we should also respect that with this 24/7 access should be treated with respect and we should consider the impact this may have on young people in particular.

## Social Media Feed?

Most social media platforms search for a notable reaction among users. This means that the funniest memes and the most popular pictures gain the most traction and reach the widest audience. However, they do not always seem to differentiate between different types of extreme reaction. This means that an angry response, will 'score' as highly as either a heart or like reaction. Similarly, both will receive a similar number of comments, also showing that it has caused a significant response. Content that is quite shocking, graphic, or heart-breaking can easily appear on a social media stream. It is also worth pointing out that content that has been clicked on, or stories that have been opened will also impact your social media feed. For example, if you clicked on a story about the recent Carabao Cup, you may find that you are presented with similar football related stories.

## Content

With the current situation in Ukraine changing and escalating quickly, it is not surprising that social media is full of information with varying degrees of accuracy or reliability. Remember that the stories that are most widely distributed are those that evoke the strongest response, not necessarily those from the most reliable sources. Also, the more interactions there are with a story on this subject, the more content on the same topic is added to the feed. It is also worth noting that when you click on a story, it is not only the topic that influences your future feed, but also the source of the story with which you interact. In other words, the more you click on stories from a less reputable source, the more stories you will see from the same place.

## Advice

There are some measures that you can consider to minimise the amount of worrying, scary or distressing content on your child's social media stream.

- Have an open dialogue with your children about the situation in Ukraine. Do they understand what is happening and why? Do they know the potential risks to the UK as far as anybody can say at present? Social media stories can tend to predict future events and consequences, often with pessimistic and sensationalised outcomes.
- Promote reliable and trustworthy sources, such as BBC and respected national newspapers. Encourage your children to go to these places for information, rather than clicking on stories from a social media feed.
- Discuss a balanced exposure to news stories. It is very easy to spend a great deal of time on the internet (and/or watching news reports) following the heart-breaking events in Ukraine. However, consider the impact this has on wellbeing and anxiety. It is important to stay informed, but also to look after ourselves.

If you have any further questions on how social media can present information to young people, or if you have any concerns on how this is impacting your son or daughter, please email me on the address below.