

Social Media Ban for Under 16s



“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom...” (Luke 2:40)

Over the past few years, increasing numbers of parents and teachers have expressed concerns about children becoming addicted to social media. Excessive amounts of time glued to a screen has come, for many young people, at the cost of being able to form ‘real’ meaningful relationships and being enabled to give adequate time to pursuing a broad spectrum of interests and hobbies. In response the Government is to introduce a ban on under 16s accessing social media platforms from spring 2027. This follows the pattern set by Australia and other nation states who are grappling to control the negative impact that social media is having on a generation of children. The crisis is best captured in the words of one teenager who when asked how much time she spent viewing social media during a weekend, answered, “Nine hours.” When asked what she would do with this time once the ban was introduced angrily responded, “Stare at a wall!”

Social media is a great tool for communicating and bringing to people’s attention a range of material from news and events etc. All five of the churches within our Benefice have a Facebook site that helps our congregations stay connected and informed; a valuable means with which to share information. Social media is now an accepted and indispensable means of bringing like-minded people together and it is difficult to imagine the modern world without it. Yet for young impressionable minds social media is also a means by which to manipulate, and even harm, the vulnerable, leading to psychological damage, including in some cases, tragically, suicide. The cry for a change to be brought about, supported by legislation, is a cry that has been born out of anguish and pain.

Every parent's wish is for their child to flourish and do well. Every teacher hopes that a child will go on to become a successful adult in the big wide world. For a 'child to grow and become strong, filled with wisdom...' both home and school are partnered to work together in offering a child opportunities to discover for themselves their gifts, and talents, and to socially develop the skills that will ensure a capacity for healthy relationships. We have now come to learn that for many children, sadly, the addictive qualities of social media sabotage this aspiration, leaving some young people unable to see any other possibility than to spend their free time 'staring at a wall.'

The next months will doubtless see several young people suffering anxiety about what the loss of social media will mean for their lives. They will need support in exploring other alternatives: sport, art, nature and culture, and a whole new world of real relationships... away from the virtual.

God Bless.

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