# Experts and advocates call for non-profit social media platform designed for child safety



# The Case for a Child-Centric Social Media Platform

In recent years, the discourse surrounding social media's impact on children and teenagers has intensified, revealing the urgent need for a tailored solution. Michael Marshall advocates for the creation of a social media platform specifically designed for young users, proposing that such an initiative be driven by non-profit efforts rather than the commercial motives of major tech companies. This perspective resonates with growing concerns about the consequences of unrestricted social media use on youth mental health.

The call for a reimagined digital landscape for children finds its urgency underscored by mounting evidence linking social media usage to mental health issues among young people. This sentiment was echoed by Prince Harry and Meghan Markle during a recent panel discussion in New York, where they highlighted the detrimental effects of social media on adolescents. The couple's appearance, part of their Archewell Foundation's commitment to mental health awareness, featured testimonies from parents who have lost children due to social media-connected issues. They stressed that better content moderation and the establishment of safer platforms are crucial for protecting vulnerable youth.

Amplifying this dialogue is Project Liberty’s campaign 'Safe Tech, Safe Kids', which aims to raise awareness about technology’s impact on children's mental well-being. By uniting diverse stakeholders—including technologists and activists—this initiative seeks to promote a collective vision for a safer digital environment for young users. Such efforts point to a broader recognition that existing social media models are often harmful, particularly given that children lack the developmental maturity to navigate these platforms safely.

Research underscores the implications of social media exposure, revealing a troubling correlation with rising anxiety, depression, and even eating disorders in children. Studies indicate that platforms frequently lead to diminished face-to-face interactions, pervasive feelings of inadequacy, and the prevalence of cyberbullying. These risks are magnified for children with pre-existing mental health conditions, highlighting the urgent need for interventions that centre on their specific vulnerabilities.

Moreover, the United States Surgeon General has issued advisories detailing the potentially harmful effects of social media on the developing brains of children and adolescents. There is substantial evidence suggesting that these platforms can hinder emotional regulation and social behaviour, leaving children susceptible to negative societal feedback. Such findings suggest a pressing necessity for the creation of a digital environment that upholds the safety and wellbeing of its young users.

Importantly, while the need for specific safeguards is readily acknowledged, the existing regulatory frameworks also present challenges. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act sets age restrictions for social media use, prohibiting children under 13 from creating accounts. Nevertheless, many young individuals bypass these limitations, exposing themselves to the risks associated with unfiltered digital interaction.

Parents are often left grappling with the emotional toll of social media on their children. They are advised to engage in proactive measures such as monitoring their child's online activity, curating content, and encouraging balanced real-life interactions. The conversation initiated by advocates like Marshall and supported by prominent figures amplifies the urgency for systemic change in how social media platforms operate and are governed.

The potential benefits of a non-profit, child-centric social media platform are manifold. Such a space could foster healthy interactions, provide a safe learning environment, and empower young users to express themselves without the pervasive pressures of the adult-dominated social media landscape. By prioritising the needs and safety of children, we can work towards a digital future that nurtures rather than endangers the younger generation.

As the discussions around these topics gain traction, it is vital to continue the dialogue, ensuring that children's voices are heard in the development of solutions designed to protect their mental health in an increasingly connected world.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiugFBVV95cUxOZjlvWHFfMHBvcTFiVVdJYnZtSU9DRU9aTjlSZVJVcTEzVDJIYmEzczFxYUd1WjRpYXE2WEZLRUhEU1IwYnE2WUVlamkxaWJWOEpZVDBmWGNiT3V6QTliWTl0Y096dE9ZeXVhaDZvRTJYZUhMRVJiZFFoS0d6MGprSmp3U0dOa2JfTWlkR2xaZzJJaUttOHRKeUtNZHlPZ0xxRm95R2xMVzVqb0R0aGJldkIyY2kyVVd3aFE?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/9ccf97565110643313fc0f9eb7750a92)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.projectliberty.io/news/project-liberty-launches-safe-tech-safe-kids-focused-on-youth-mental-health-and-social-media/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media/social-media-and-kids), [[5]](https://www.massgeneralbrigham.org/en/about/newsroom/articles/kids-social-media-mental-health)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/social-media-and-mental-health-in-children-and-teens)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media/kids-privacy-social-media)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiugFBVV95cUxOZjlvWHFfMHBvcTFiVVdJYnZtSU9DRU9aTjlSZVJVcTEzVDJIYmEzczFxYUd1WjRpYXE2WEZLRUhEU1IwYnE2WUVlamkxaWJWOEpZVDBmWGNiT3V6QTliWTl0Y096dE9ZeXVhaDZvRTJYZUhMRVJiZFFoS0d6MGprSmp3U0dOa2JfTWlkR2xaZzJJaUttOHRKeUtNZHlPZ0xxRm95R2xMVzVqb0R0aGJldkIyY2kyVVd3aFE?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/9ccf97565110643313fc0f9eb7750a92> - On October 10, 2023, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle addressed the negative impact of social media on young people's mental health during a panel discussion in New York. The event, organized by their Archewell Foundation as part of the Project Healthy Minds mental health awareness festival, featured parents who had lost children due to issues linked to social media. Harry and Meghan emphasized the need for better content moderation and safer platforms. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, also present, highlighted the mental health crisis among youth exacerbated by rapidly advancing technology. In a parallel event in the UK, Prince William and Princess Kate called for action to support young people's mental health.
3. <https://www.projectliberty.io/news/project-liberty-launches-safe-tech-safe-kids-focused-on-youth-mental-health-and-social-media/> - Project Liberty, a global impact organization, announced the launch of 'Safe Tech, Safe Kids,' a year-long campaign aimed at building awareness and driving action around the issue of technology's impact on the mental health of children worldwide. The campaign brings together organizations, technologists, and activists who believe that technology should be safe for young people. It aims to elevate the voices of young people, parents, and other key stakeholders impacted by harmful tech and social media models, and spotlight ideas, innovators, and initiatives that show that a better way is not only necessary but possible.
4. <https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media/social-media-and-kids> - Social media use can increase anxiety and depression in children, negatively influence brain development, and expose them to inappropriate sharing, hurtful language, and bullying. These risks are even more pronounced for children diagnosed with ADHD, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Common risks include the fear of missing out (FOMO), overemphasis on appearance, and replacement of real-life interactions with online engagement.
5. <https://www.massgeneralbrigham.org/en/about/newsroom/articles/kids-social-media-mental-health> - Social media use has been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and even eating disorders, especially in teens. Key reasons include reduced face-to-face interactions, increased exposure to comparison, and cyberbullying. Social media platforms are designed to keep users engaged, often at the expense of mental health, leading to body image issues, feelings of exclusion, sleep disruptions, and constant comparison.
6. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/social-media-and-mental-health-in-children-and-teens> - The United States Surgeon General released a social media advisory in 2023 about social media and mental health. Evidence suggests that social media has the potential to harm the mental health of children and adolescents, potentially affecting parts of the brain related to emotions and learning, as well as impulse control, social behavior, emotional regulation, and sensitivity to social punishments and rewards.
7. <https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media/kids-privacy-social-media> - Parents should avoid setting up social media accounts for children under 13, as most platforms require users to be over 13 per the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). It's important to limit personal information in profiles, restrict who can see the profile, avoid posting detailed photos, limit connections to people the child knows in real life, control chat features, curate content, restrict advertising, and check device settings for parental controls.