

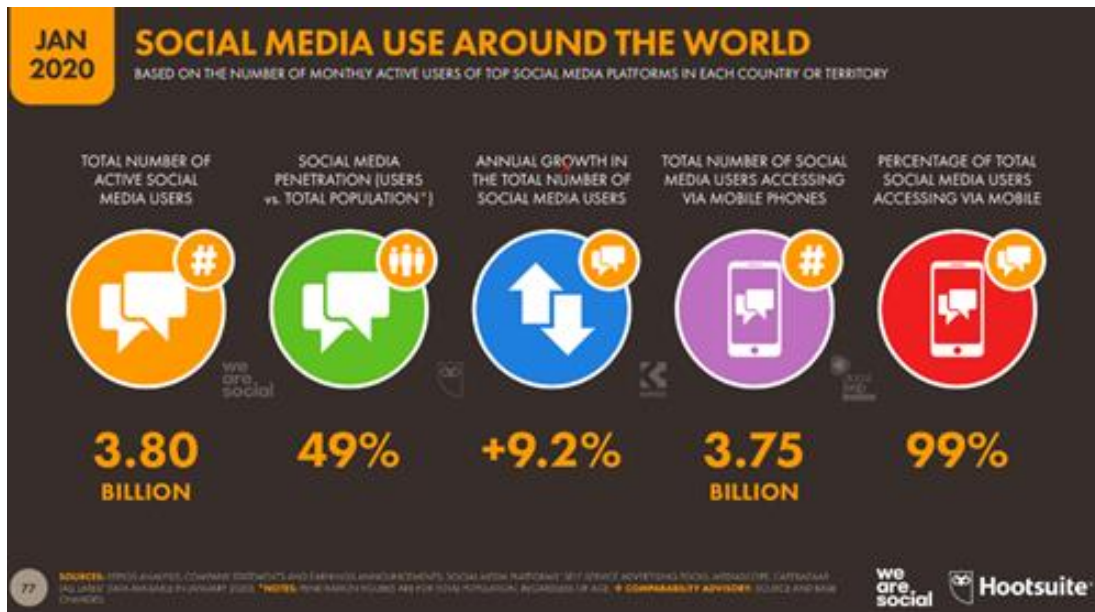


Knowledge bite

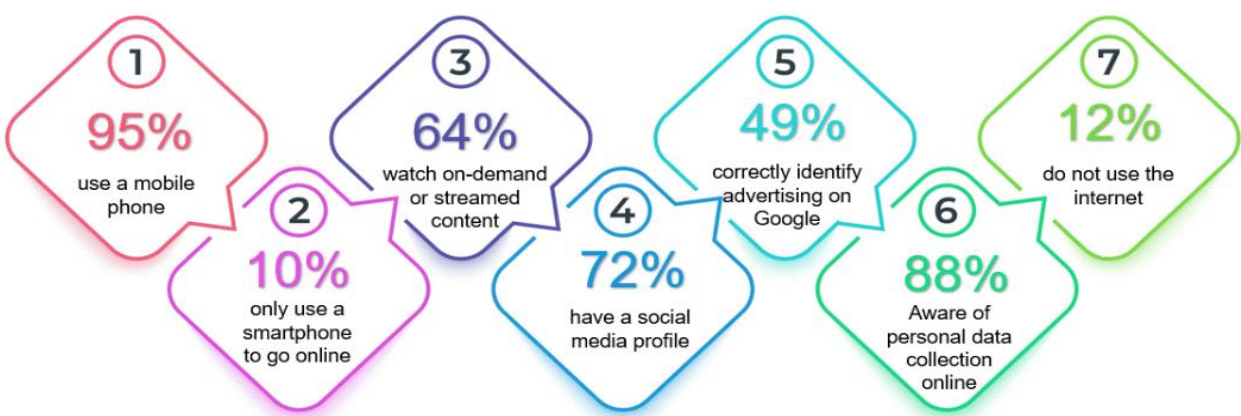
Social work in a connected world

Digital social work is a system in which information is recorded or sent out electronically. We are aware of the risks and benefits of digital working and should be mindful that it can also lead to addictive behaviours for ourselves, parents, children and other professionals.

Note: This knowledge bite should be read in conjunction with the Social Media and Online Communication eLearning available on CafcassLearning.



OFCOM - **Adults' Media Use & Attitudes** report 2020 **Media use, by nation: a snapshot England:**

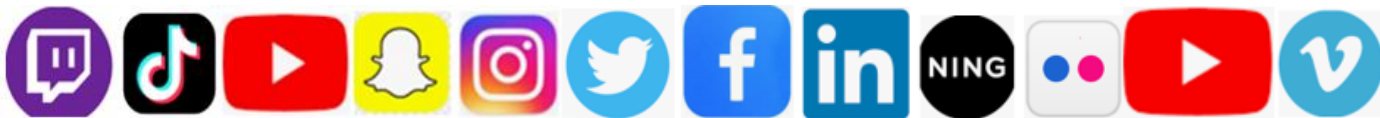


In June 2020 a [BBC News Technology report](#) stated that UK's internet use surges to new highs during lockdown. It stated that UK adults spent a quarter of their waking day online during lockdown - a record high, according to Ofcom.

- During April, adults spent an average of four hours a day online, up from three-and-a-half in September 2019, the communications watchdog said.
- Seven in 10 people made video calls at least once a week during lockdown, with millions turning to Zoom for the first time.

The pandemic has radically changed online behaviour, said Ofcom.

The regulator's Online Nation report found that people are seeking new ways to keep connected, informed, entertained and fit during lockdown.



- Twitch, the livestreaming platform for gamers, saw visitors increase from 2.3 million in January to 4.2 million in April.
- TikTok, which allows users to create and share short videos, reached 12.9 million UK visitors in April, up from 5.4 million in January.
- Much of Ofcom's report focused on people's online habits in September 2019, before the coronavirus struck.
- At that point, nine in 10 adults and almost all children spent time on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram, according to the study.
- And nearly half of adults watch videos on such platforms several times a day, rising to 73% for children aged eight to 15.
- People are no longer just passive consumers, with two in five adults uploading videos to TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat or Instagram.

The Professional Capabilities Framework states that the use of social media includes “ethical decision-making: There are additional ethical issues to consider, such as an increased ethical duty to maintain data security given the large amount of personal information social workers have access to, and the risk of ‘boundary issues’ as private lives become more public on social media.”

It also states that we should consolidate our knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and risks of new technologies, digital resources, online communications, virtual environments and social media in social work.

BASW Social Media Policy definition of social media

‘The term “social media” and “social networking” are often used interchangeably to refer to web-based tools and technologies that support online communication and information sharing. Social media is in effect a publishing and broadcasting medium and includes:

- Blogs – writing a blog or commenting on people’s blogs
- Micro-blogs such as Twitter and other social networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning, and having a personal profile page on one of the social or business networking sites content-sharing services, such as Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo etc.
- Product or service reviews on retailer sites, or customer review sites
- Taking part in online votes and polls
- Taking part in conversations on public and private web forums (message boards)
- Wikis are websites developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content
- Podcasts
- Social bookmarking, such as Delicious
- Location based services (e.g. Foursquare)’

(British Association of Social Workers (2018) BASW Policy: Social Media. Birmingham: BASW)

‘BASW encourages the positive uses of social media for networking, communication and developing inclusive practice. Social media can enhance communication and be used as a positive tool in social work. BASW believes that good practice in social media is no different from that in any other form of communication. Social workers should ensure they maintain appropriate professional and personal boundaries and take responsibility for recognising ethical dilemmas presented by the use of different types of social media.’



The use of social technology and social networking enables people to collaborate, build relationships and share information and resources. Proactive engagement in social media can provide a 'facilitative platform for achieving social work's main objectives of greater equity and enhanced social justice. It can provide an opportunity for challenging power imbalances and exclusion imposed by structural hierarchies. It can reclaim power through creation of new spaces for dialogue and a more dynamic social interaction'.

Social media and social networking interfaces (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Skype, WhatsApp etc.) might be used by social workers and other professionals, children and families of all ages accessing social work services.

Research by Buzzi et al. indicates that more than nine out of ten social workers do not consider social media and online risks in their assessments and reports, except when there is a specific concern in relation to social media or children's online engagement. Buzzi et al. researching the preferences of young people and their families and carers using semi structured phone interview combined with focus groups found:

- Young people and their families would like practitioners to liaise with them through multiple communication channels including social media, text and email; and
- Young people and their families indicate that flexible use of digital and social media technologies can generate and sustain a feeling of closeness and caring.

Research published by Tarsem Singh Cooner, Liz Beddoe, Harry Ferguson & Eileen Joy (2020) on 'The use of Facebook in social work practice with children and families-exploring complexity in an emerging practice, found that: "Much greater clarity and guidance is needed for social work leaders, managers and practitioners to help them navigate their way through this digital mine field...to avoid social work going down a similar morally indefensible road, or more accurately to remove it from the road it is already on, the profession needs to protect service users from unthinking, unethical, and potentially illegal social media use, while opening up discussion around the use of social media as a possible resource in child protection."



Summary: Digital Capabilities Statement for Social Workers **Published: March 2020**

The Digital Capabilities Statement is a practice framework that outlines the knowledge, skills and values that social workers should have in order to use digital technology in practice with adults, children and families in England.

It provides a framework to:

- assist social workers with practice judgements and decision-making
- support social workers to meet the needs of adults, children or families who use or could benefit from digital technology
- support trainers and educators to consider how to strengthen social workers' understanding of the role of digital technology in social work.

It supports social workers to meet and adhere to the regulatory standards – The Professional Standards – developed by Social Work England, and sector-wide agreed levels of ethics, knowledge and performance in the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Knowledge and Skills Statements for children and adult social work.

The statement has been developed by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), with the support of a sector-wide advisory group, in consultation with key stakeholders, and funding from the Building the Digitally Ready Workforce Programme managed by Health Education England and supported by NHS Digital.

Social Work England Professional standards

The *Professional Standards* listed below state explicitly that social workers require digital capabilities to practice and they are also implicit in the other. This refers to the inappropriate use of social media and digital technologies, among other behaviours

Standard 2.6
Treat information about people with sensitivity and handle confidential information in line with the law.

Standard 3.10 Establish and maintain skills in information and communication technology and adapt my practice to new ways of working, as appropriate.

Standard 3.11 Maintain clear, accurate, legible and up to date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions.

WILL NOT Standard 5.2
Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker while at work, or outside of work.
(SWE, 2019; p. 12)

WILL NOT Standard 5.6 Use technology, social media or other forms of electronic communication unlawfully, unethically, or in a way that brings the profession into disrepute.

Standard 6.1 Report allegations of harm and challenge and report exploitation and any dangerous, abusive or discriminatory behaviour or practice.

(SWE, 2019; p. 12).



What is digital resilience? (UK Council for internet safety)

'Digital resilience is a dynamic personality asset that grows from digital activation i.e. through engaging with appropriate opportunities and challenges online, rather than through avoidance and safety behaviours.'

Features associated with resilience

- Planning tendency (propensity to plan).
- A style of self-reflection as to what worked and what didn't work.
- A sense of agency or determination to deal with challenge.
- Self-confidence in being able to deal with challenges successfully.

Understand

An individual understands when they are at risk online and can make informed decisions about the digital space they are in

Know

An individual knows what to do to seek help from a range of appropriate sources

DIGITAL RESILIENCE

Learn

An individual learns from their experiences and is able to adapt their future choices, where possible

Recover

An individual can recover when things go wrong online by receiving the appropriate level of support to aid recovery

Dr Peter Buzzi give some suggestions to support better coping such as:

- Regular supervision
- Virtual cake and coffee/tea and other collective opportunities
- If possible pair up with colleagues for work
- Enhance immediate and ongoing safety and provide physical and emotional comfort
- Take time off to reflect and articulate immediate needs and concerns as well as emotions and fears
- Buddy system and connect people to peers, networks and resources
- Emotion Audit
- Improved digital routine: for example, no digital devices at meal times
- Get a real alarm clock and sleep device free
- Leave your phone outside your bedroom for charging
- Make a digital fast at least one hour a day – preferably same time every day (e.g. when you get home from work)
- Make eye contact when talking on mobile devices
- End your digital day at least one hour before going to sleep
- Have a digital identity but don't let your digital persona dominate your identity
- Move from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) to JOMO (Joy of Missing Out)

[Immersive and addictive technologies](#) (House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee) is a comprehensive review of some of the risks of online gaming and gambling for adults and children. There are recommendations about how the government plan to address some of these issues to make the internet safer for all.

How SMART are you?

The internet of things (IoT) refers to 'smart devices which use wireless technology to talk to each other. There is a prediction that by 2020 there could be 200 billion smart objects which equates to 26 for every human being. Smart devices are in factories, businesses, retail, health care, ATMs, internet, smart meters, keep fit, navigation, locks, education and robots etc.

Why you can't have your cookie and eat it?

When you use the internet, a cookie will map your activity and share information about your likes and dislikes so that you can be targeted by other companies. There is no such thing as a free cookie, as most sites ask you to accept their cookies before you can purchase goods, services and/or access information. Good legitimate websites should encrypt the information stored in the cookie so that it cannot be accessed by others, without your permission **e.g. watch out** for the list of partners in the terms, which could be anybody they are in contact with.



Mobile Device Forensics

Practitioners might need the court to ask children and families to handover their phones and other electronic devices, so that they can recover digital evidence from the internal memory and other storage. Mobile phones are the most personal electronic devices that children and family's accesses. They are used for simple communication tasks, such as calling, texting, internet browsing, e-mail, taking photos, videos, creating and storing documents, identifying locations with GPS services, health and wellbeing, managing home and office tasks and activities etc. New features are continually added to mobile phones which results in increased storage of information and the capacity to keep individuals and organisations connected.

There is a growth in the features and applications which increases the information stored on these devices. Mobile phones are data carriers and keep us connected with the world. Digital devices can provide a wealth of evidence when safeguarding children and families in the family court. There is a steady increase in digital forensic investigation of phones and other devices in some cases.

We should always respect the rights and dignity of individuals in all cases. Our practice should be fair and ethical. It should help to support and build good working relationships and trust. Forensic interventions should only be considered where there are no other alternatives.

[According to Safer Internet Centre:](#) 'Key advice for social workers about understanding the impact of digital technologies on child protection'.

It is vital that social workers:

- have a knowledge of the latest online threats, risks and trends in online communications and social networking
- understand the impact of technology on the lives of children and young people
- consider the use of technology by parents and carers which may impact on family functioning
- include relevant questions in family assessments to gain an understanding of the role of technology on children's lived experience
- structure interventions which support appropriate use of technology within families.

UK safer Internet Centre states: '**Your online reputation is the perception, estimation and opinion that is formed when you are encountered online.** This could be when someone visits your social networking profile, but could also be when anyone reads a comment you posted on another profile. It could also be when someone sees your online photo albums or an image with you in it, indeed any instance or reference of you that either you posted or someone else did - what your digital footprint says about you.

Your online reputation will be formed through:

- Posts by you
- Posts by others but about you or linked to you
- Posts by others pretending to be you

Who does it affect?

Everyone! Obviously it applies to those who post online, however as other people could be posting information about you, you don't even have to have been on the internet before to have an online reputation! Rory Cellan-Jones commented on a survey conducted by Anti Virus Guard (AVG) and concluded that [23% of unborn children already have a digital footprint](#).

Why is your online reputation important?

Many businesses and celebrities value their online identity and reputation and go to extraordinary lengths to protect it, in many cases taking legal action. Your reputation should be important to you as it is a tool that others could and will use to make decisions about you. Clearly this could have a dramatic effect on your personal and professional lives, especially if your digital footprint is poor. Would you like a potential partner or employer to decide whether to see you or not purely based on your digital footprint? Media headlines regularly appear, such as ["Disgrace of the six drinking, pole-dancing primary school teachers who published the pictures on Facebook"](#).

What does your profile picture or avatar say about you?

How is your online reputation different?

Remember that the internet never forgets - when you post something online it will always be there.

Who can help if you are a professional? Our [Professional Online Safety Helpline](#) is a free service, dedicated to help teachers, school staff and anyone working with children and young people. Professional reputation is one of the most common issues we hear about from professionals. We can help with advice and information on how to help protect and manage your professional reputation.





How easy is it to Deepfake? How do they work and just how harmful can they be?

Deepfakes - or Deep Faking - are being a real problem in the fake news era, but what exactly are these troublesome videos?

[This article](#) gives some examples of how artificial intelligence can be used to change pictures and video recordings so that they sound and look like the real person. The end result is so convincing they can make you think that is the real person or object.

How easy are they to make?

'These videos have previously taken hours or even days to create, however recent reports suggest that an app from China is making it 'faster to fake'.

Sao made a name for itself putting different faces on famous actors in movie scenes, a change one [Twitter](#) user claimed took just 8 seconds.

The increased speed and ease of these systems are adding to growing concerns from politicians and people in the public eye that the content is increasingly quick to create and more convincing.'

Watch this YouTube made by BBC Click [Deepfakes and the technology behind it](#)

N.B When video and audio recordings are presented as evidence it could require forensic analysis if there are concerns about its validity.

Social work, Social Media

The University of Birmingham has produced resources to develop social workers and students understanding of social media in social work practice, and the related ethical issues. [Facebook: an unethical practice or effective tool in child protection](#) is a freely available YouTube video based on an ethnographic study of child protection social work practice in England. Social workers have been using social media as a way to 'collapse borders' between social workers and service users, to gain another view of service-users lives through monitoring their Facebook pages. This video reports how social workers provided researchers with a rationale for their use of Facebook and analyses the ethics of such practice.

The aim of the video is to trigger discussions about the ethical use of social media in social work practice. The University also produced an app to explore ethical issues of using social media in social work. There is a reference to social workers stalking children and families on social media sites, because it is done covertly without the families knowledge.

'Social work, social media' features a fictional team manager called Adrian who is facing ethical dilemmas around social media use. The app user tries to help Adrian make the right decisions to ensure his team's practices are consistent with social work ethics and values. They are encouraged to reflect on those decisions and consider the potential impact these may have on day-to-day practice.

The app explores themes such as:

- Is social media skills development important for social workers?
- What are the ethical implications of exploring open social media profiles?
- Does social media present new personal/professional boundary issues?
- Can skills, knowledge and confidence in social media use, lead to greater service user, community, inter-professional engagement?