



Newsletter Topics: The UK Under-16 Social Media Ban | Social Media and Instant Messaging

Under 16 Social Media Ban

You may have seen recent news about the government's plan to ban children under 16 from using social media. This newsletter explains what the proposed ban means, which platforms are affected, and how you can support your child through these changes.

What is the Ban and When Will It Happen?

The Prime Minister announced that under-16s will be banned from using major social media platforms, with the changes expected to take effect in spring 2027.

Why is the government doing this?

The proposal follows growing concern about:

- Cyberbullying and harmful content
- Addictive platform design (e.g. "infinite scroll")
- The impact of social media on children's mental health and wellbeing

A government consultation found that 89% of parents and carers strongly supported a legal minimum age for social media access.



Which Platforms Are Banned and Which Are Allowed?

The government has confirmed the following platforms will be included in the ban (NOT a final list)

- ✗ TikTok
- ✗ Instagram
- ✗ Snapchat
- ✗ YouTube (main app)
- ✗ Facebook
- ✗ X



The following example services are not covered by the ban:

- ✓ WhatsApp
- ✓ Signal
- ✓ Facebook Messenger
- ✓ YouTube Kids
- ✓ Google Classroom
- ✓ Discord
- ✓ Steam
- ✓ Gaming Platforms



Social Media vs Instant Messaging

The ban targets platforms whose primary purpose is public social interaction and algorithm-driven content sharing. Private messaging apps are exempt.

Important: While instant messaging is private from the outside, it is not private from the people inside your child's chats. Messages can be screenshotted and shared. Just because an app is allowed doesn't mean it is risk-free.

What's the Difference Between Social Media and Instant Messaging?

Feature	Social Media	Instant Messaging
Primary purpose	Public content sharing and discovery	Private, one-to-one or small group communication
Audience	Potentially millions of strangers	Known contacts only
Content delivery	Algorithm-driven feed (e.g. "For You" page)	Chronological, based on who you choose to message
Permanence (how long content lasts)	Content can be shared, saved, and reshared widely	Messages are private, though screenshots are possible
Risk	Exposure to harmful content, comparison culture, addiction	Group chat pressure, screenshot sharing, unknown contacts in groups