



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

18 January 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to request urgent action to raise the minimum age for access to social media platforms to 16 years old.

Across my constituency, I hear the same message: children are anxious, unhappy, and unable to focus on learning. They are not building the social skills needed to thrive, nor having the experiences that will prepare them for adulthood.

At home, the average 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week on a smartphone, much of it on social media platforms rife with harmful content, designed to be addictive. The consequences of this are clear. More than 500 children a day are being referred for anxiety alone in England. For teenage boys, going from zero to five hours of daily social media use is associated with a doubling of depression rates. For girls, rates triple.

Around the world, Governments are recognising the severity of this crisis and taking action. Australia has banned tech companies from providing social media accounts to under 16s. Denmark, France, Norway, New Zealand and Greece are expected to follow suit. Britain risks being left behind.

I believe the onus must be placed on technology platforms, not parents, to prevent underage access. I would support a model similar to Australia's that requires companies to take meaningful steps to enforce age limits.

Public support for this approach is strong. Many of my constituents have recently got in touch sharing their concerns about the impact of social media on children and asking us to support a social media minimum age of 16. Most strikingly, young people themselves recognise the harm: 78% of Gen Z say they would try to delay their child using social media as long as possible.

I am a strong supporter of technology, and of this Labour Government's ambition to use tech to improve lives. But successive Governments have done far too little to protect young people from the consequences of unregulated, addictive social media platforms.

I urge the Government to show leadership on this issue by introducing a minimum age for social media access of 16 years old.

With kind regards,

Tom Hayes MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East