

**How Do Youth Workers in Wales Address
Mental Health Challenges Linked to Social
Media Use Among 11-14-Year-Olds?**

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Yr Athrofa: Education and Humanities

DECLARATION FORM



Dissertation Declaration Form.

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: LDavies

Date: 7th May 2026

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts Youth Work and Social Education (ETS Endorsed).

Signed: LDavies

Date: 7th May 2026

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

A reference list is appended.

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4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter- library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository

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5. Supervisor's Declaration.

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

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AI DECLARATION

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Youth Workers in Wales address mental health challenges linked to social media use among young people aged 11-14 years. Using a qualitative small-scale case study approach, data was collected through an online questionnaire completed by practitioners across Wales and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings suggest that social media is associated with emotional, behavioural, and social challenges, including anxiety, self-esteem concerns, peer conflict, and disrupted sleep.

However, these impacts were shaped by wider contextual factors such as peer relationships, developmental stage, individual vulnerability and the wider social and emotional environments in which young people live. Practitioners described using relational and informal approaches to support digital wellbeing, although inconsistencies in training and organisational support were identified.

Overall, the study argues that social media should be understood as one influence within wider adolescent experiences instead of being the only cause of poor mental health. The findings highlight the importance of relational Youth Work practice and the need for improved training and guidance in digital wellbeing for practitioners in Wales.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing role of social media in the everyday lives of young people has become a significant area of focus across Youth Work, education, and mental health research. Digital platforms are now linked to how young people develop identity, form relationships and understand their emotional wellbeing (Erikson, 1968; Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022). As a result, concerns around mental health and online pressures are increasingly discussed within academic research and Youth Work practice (Ofcom, 2023; Haidt, 2024). Social media is no longer a separate aspect of young people's lives but is embedded in how they communicate and express themselves (Livingstone and Smith, 2014; Nesi, Choukas-Bradley and Prinstein, 2018).

This study focuses on Youth Work practice in Wales and explores how practitioners respond to the emotional and psychological impacts of social media among young people aged 11-14 years. This age group is particularly important as early adolescence is a critical stage of development where identity, self-esteem, and peer relationships are forming, alongside increasing influence from online environments (Steinberg, 2014; Viner *et al.*, 2019).

Therefore, this study is guided by the following research question: *How do Youth Workers in Wales address mental health challenges linked to social media use among 11-14-year-olds?*

A note on terminology: throughout this independent project, 'Youth Workers' is used as an umbrella term to describe the various roles of the participants.

While there is a growing body of research examining the relationship between social media and mental health, findings remain complex (Orben and Przybylski, 2019). However, there is still limited research that explores how Youth Workers in Wales understand and respond to these issues in practice. This creates a gap between academic understanding of digital

wellbeing and how it is applied within Youth Work settings, highlighting the need for practitioner-focused research.

This research therefore aims to explore how Youth Workers identify and respond to social media-related wellbeing concerns in practice. It focuses on issues such as social comparison, peer conflict, exposure to harmful or unrealistic content, pressure around online identity, and changes in emotional wellbeing (Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022). In practice, it may be difficult to distinguish between everyday online experiences and more serious signs of distress, which highlights the importance of professional judgement and relational practice, alongside safeguarding awareness (Community Learning and Development (CLD) Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Youth Work in Wales is guided by values such as participation, empowerment, inclusion, informal education and voluntary engagement (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019; Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022). These principles shape how practitioners engage with young people through voluntary participation and relationship-based practice.

The study uses a qualitative, small-scale case study approach, using practitioner questionnaires and open-ended responses from practitioners working with young people in Wales. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of professional perspectives and lived experience (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The data is analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in how digital wellbeing is understood and supported in practice. This method is suitable as it allows the researcher to identify recurring meanings and shared professional understandings, while also recognising differences in practice across participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2017).

The findings aim to support practitioners, organisations, and the wider sector by providing insight into how digital wellbeing is understood and addressed professionally. Although young people are not directly involved in the research, they remain the main group who may benefit from improved understanding and more consistent professional support.

This research contributes to existing knowledge by focusing on Youth Work practice in Wales, an area that is underrepresented in current digital wellbeing literature. It also adds practitioner-based evidence to a field often dominated by psychological or quantitative perspectives. While the study is in Wales, many of the issues explored, including practitioner confidence and digital wellbeing support, are relevant across wider Youth Work settings. This means the findings may contribute to wider discussion about how community-based professionals understand and respond to online wellbeing concerns.

Several limitations are acknowledged. The small-scale nature of the study limits the ability to generalise findings, and the focus on practitioner perspectives means young people's lived experiences are not directly captured. However, the study prioritises depth and offers meaningful professional insight.

The researcher's motivation for undertaking this research is based on their experience within Youth Work practice and an interest in how social media influences young people's emotional and social development. In practice, it is clear that social media plays a significant role in shaping young people's wellbeing, although practitioners may have varying levels of confidence in responding to these challenges. The researcher acknowledges that this perspective may influence interpretation, however, reflexive awareness has been applied throughout the research process to ensure findings remain grounded in participant data.

This research aims to contribute to a more informed and reflective understanding of Youth Work practice in relation to digital wellbeing. It seeks to understand how Youth Workers in Wales support young people aged 11-14 years in managing the emotional and psychological effects of social media. The objectives are to explore how Youth Workers define digital wellbeing, identify common issues linked to social media use, examine how Youth Work values shape practice, and highlight areas for improvement in professional understanding and support.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The relationship between adolescent social media use and mental health is complex and remains a widely debated topic within Youth Work, education and psychological research. While some studies identify associations between social media use and poorer mental health outcomes, the overall evidence remains inconsistent, with many large-scale studies reporting small effects and limited evidence that social media is directly associated with mental health problems (Huang, 2017; Orben and Przybylski, 2019; Viner *et al.*, 2019; Keles *et al.*, 2020). This lack of agreement reflects ongoing debate in the literature between those who view social media as a risk factor and those who view it as one of many influences on adolescent development.

This chapter examines peer-reviewed literature on the impact of social media engagement among adolescents. It explores research methods, theoretical approaches and differences in findings across studies. Rather than assuming digital platforms are harmful for all adolescents, this review explores whether online environments create risks, reflect wider social pressures or play a normal role in adolescent development (Boyd, 2014). In doing so, risk-based and strength-based perspectives are considered to provide a balanced understanding. The review further considers how these debates inform Youth Work practice, particularly in terms of relationship-based approaches and preventative strategies that aim to strengthen young people's resilience (Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

2.2 Review of literature

Patterns of social media use

Digital platforms now play a key role in everyday life for most 11-14-year-olds, with Ofcom (2023) reporting high levels of daily engagement with smartphones and social media use (Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022; Ofcom, 2023). Online engagement includes communication, video sharing and participation across multiple social media platforms (Boyd, 2014; Anderson and Jiang, 2018). Research suggests that these forms of interaction influence wellbeing in different ways. For instance, Twenge *et al.* (2018), suggest that increased screen time after 2010 is associated with rising reports of depressive symptoms and other negative outcomes among adolescents in the United States. However, later studies argue that these links do not necessarily mean social media causes depression (Odgers and Jensen, 2020; Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022).

This reflects a wider methodological issue in the field, where connections are often interpreted as causal relationships despite limited supporting evidence. These findings are largely based on American data, meaning cultural, educational systems and family differences require caution when applying conclusions to adolescents in Wales. This is important because differences in schooling, safeguarding systems, and digital culture may shape behaviour and how wellbeing is being reported.

UK evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study (Kelly *et al.*, 2018) provides additional insight. Viner *et al.* (2019), suggest that how young people use platforms may be more significant than overall time spent online, with factors such as sleep, cyberbullying, and physical activity playing a role. Nesi (2020) highlights that different forms of engagement can have varying effects on wellbeing, with active communication supporting social

connection, while passive scrolling may contribute to negative comparison processes (Kelly *et al.*, 2018; Nesi, 2020). However, large-scale studies may overlook the complexity of individual experience, particularly within community-based Youth Work settings (Boyd, 2014; Odgers and Jensen, 2020).

Some researchers argue that wider social changes also influence adolescent wellbeing. For example, Haidt (2024) suggests that reduced outdoor play and constant digital connection may amplify social comparison and peer pressure to present idealised versions of themselves online. However, this interpretation reflects one perspective within an ongoing debate, with empirical findings across the field remaining mixed (Orben and Przybylski, 2019).

Research in Wales provides important local insights. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales (2024a) found that most children reported generally positive experiences online and feeling safe in digital environments. However, a minority said apps like Roblox, YouTube, and Snapchat sometimes made them feel “unsafe or unhappy”. The survey also found that only around a third of young people believed reporting online concerns led to action (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2024a). This demonstrates that digital experiences are not the same for everyone, reinforcing the need to understand each young person’s situation within Youth Work practice.

From a Youth Work perspective, supporting adolescents to reflect on online activity, recognise emotional triggers and balance online and offline activity may strengthen resilience and informed decision-making (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). This reflects Youth Work principles of empowerment and participation, alongside young people’s right to access information that supports wellbeing and decision-making (UNICEF, 1989; CLD Standards

Council Scotland, 2019). However, this depends on consistent access to Youth Work support, which may not always be equally available across communities.

Mental health outcomes

Several studies identify links between heavy social media engagement and internalising mental health difficulties, including depressive symptoms and anxiety (Twenge *et al.*, 2018; Viner *et al.*, 2019; Boers *et al.*, 2019; Keles *et al.*, 2020). These studies suggest that increased social media use may be linked with depressive symptoms and anxiety through factors such as reduced sleep, physical activity, face-to-face interaction, cyberbullying, and social comparison. However, the effects identified are generally small, and group level findings do not imply that all adolescents are negatively affected (Odgers and Jensen, 2020).

It is important to note that Twenge *et al.* (2018) present a more concerned interpretation of rising mental health trends, whereas Orben and Przybylski (2019) offer a more cautious interpretation, suggesting that observed associations are small and often depend on methodological approach. These studies therefore differ in how they interpret the strength and meaning of the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes.

As a result, findings may either overestimate ongoing negative effects or miss short-term or individual experiences. This is complicated further by relying on self-reported measures of screen time and wellbeing, which may reduce accuracy and limit interpretation. For some adolescents, social media may support social connection, while interacting with wider pressures such as reduced leisure time, academic expectations, and family demands (Odgers and Jensen, 2020; Haidt, 2024). These findings suggest social media is better understood as

one influence within a wider social environment, and not a direct cause of poor mental health (Boyd, 2014; Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022).

For Youth Work practitioners, these findings support a relational and strengths-based approach. Rather than viewing social media as automatically harmful, practitioners can facilitate reflective discussions and support young people to develop safer online habits. This aligns with core Youth Work principles of voluntary participation, supportive relationships and empowerment (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). Jeffs and Smith (2010) similarly emphasise Youth Work as relational and conversational practice instead of direct approaches focused on controlling behaviour.

Factors shaping the impact of social media on adolescent wellbeing

Recent research has shifted away from measuring total screen time and now focuses on exploring the factors that influence whether social media experiences are positive or harmful. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that individuals often compare themselves with others, and on platforms where images are edited or filtered, adolescents may compare themselves with this content, potentially lowering their self-esteem (Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022).

Nesi (2020) highlights that platform features such as likes and follower counts may increase sensitivity to peer approval, especially in early adolescence when identity and social status are developing. Developmental neuroscience also suggests that during adolescence, the prefrontal cortex, linked to decision making and impulse control, is still developing

(Steinberg, 2014), so this may increase sensitivity to social feedback and online validation (Odgers and Jensen, 2020).

Cyberbullying is another important factor, with evidence suggesting that harm is often linked to peer relationships and conflict rather than the technology itself (Boyd, 2014; Livingstone and Smith, 2014). Przybylski and Weinstein's (2017, p. 205) "Goldilocks hypothesis" suggests that moderate digital engagement may be neutral or beneficial, while very high or very low levels of use may be linked with lower wellbeing. However, this model groups social media engagement into broad categories and may overlook differences in content, context and individual experience, which are important considerations within Youth Work settings.

Cultural and community context remains under-explored. Much research relies on large national datasets, while less attention is given to smaller communities or rural settings where social opportunities and services may differ. For Youth Work practice, understanding these factors allows practitioners to move beyond restrictions on technology. Instead, practitioners may promote critical reflection and resilience building, aligning with Youth Work principles (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Vulnerability, age, and gender

Early adolescence is a sensitive developmental period in relation to social media use.

Steinberg (2014) and Odgers and Jensen (2020) note that adolescence is a period of ongoing cognitive and emotional development, during which young people may have heightened sensitivity to social feedback and online interaction, potentially making them more vulnerable

in digital environments. Gender differences are evident, with several studies reporting that girls show stronger associations between heavy social media use and depressive symptoms (Kelly *et al.*, 2018; Viner *et al.*, 2019), potentially linked to appearance-focused comparison and relational forms of online interaction. These patterns may also reflect wider differences in how adolescent boys and girls experience and express emotional distress in online contexts (Nesi, 2020; Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022).

Odgers and Jensen (2020) suggest that pre-existing vulnerabilities may shape outcomes, with social media potentially intensifying difficulties for some young people while having little impact on others. Adolescents experiencing loneliness or low self-esteem may therefore be more affected by negative online experiences. However, much of this evidence uses cross-sectional data, meaning it is unclear whether social media contributes to vulnerability or whether vulnerable young people engage differently online.

Youth Workers are well positioned to identify adolescents at risk early, through relationship-based support, creating supportive spaces where young people feel comfortable discussing online experiences. This supports empowerment and participation, enabling young people to develop critical awareness of their digital behaviour (UNICEF, 1989; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). However, this relies on consistent Youth Work provision, which may not be available in all communities.

Research and contextual gaps

Despite the growing literature, gaps in the research remain. Much existing evidence is based on large datasets from the United States or wider UK contexts, which may not reflect the

experiences of adolescents in Wales or in community Youth Work settings (Viner *et al.*, 2019; Odgers and Jensen, 2020). There is also limited research focusing specifically on community Youth Work environments, with many studies concentrating on schools or clinical settings, overlooking the preventative and relationship-based nature of Youth Work practice (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Qualitative research exploring how adolescents make sense of digital interactions remains limited. Surveys in Wales offer important insight into online safety, reporting behaviour and young people's experiences of digital engagement (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2024a; 2024b). However, there remains limited research exploring how Youth Workers in Wales interpret and respond to social media-related mental health concerns. These limitations highlight a clear gap which this study seeks to address.

2.3 Summary

Overall, social media alone does not explain rising mental health concerns among adolescents. Higher levels of engagement are linked with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, yet these relationships are generally modest and vary depending on the type of engagement and existing vulnerabilities (Twenge *et al.*, 2018; Viner *et al.*, 2019; Boers *et al.*, 2019). Factors such as social comparison and sleep disruption may contribute to adolescent wellbeing outcomes, although these influences are shaped by wider social influences and individual context (Orben and Przybylski, 2019; Odgers and Jensen, 2020).

Future research should prioritise small-scale, community-based studies to better understand lived experiences, particularly in settings in Wales. A Youth Work perspective can strengthen

links between academic research and practice, offering clearer insight into how digital wellbeing is supported in everyday Youth Work practice.

3. METHODOLOGY / METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to investigate the research question: *How do Youth Workers in Wales address mental health challenges linked to social media use among 11-14-year-olds?* It explains the research methodology guiding the study and the specific methods used to collect and analyse the data.

Methodology refers to the overall research approach, while methods describe the practical techniques used to collect and analyse data (O’Leary, 2021). A clear methodological framework helps to connect research design, data collection, and analysis to the research aims, helping the study remain organised and well structured (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This is particularly important as the research focuses on practitioner perspectives, meaning the chosen methods need to capture depth of experience beyond general patterns.

3.2 Methodological Approach

This research uses a primarily qualitative approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of Youth Workers working in Wales. Qualitative research aims to understand individuals’ experiences within their real-life contexts rather than reducing these experiences to numerical data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Bryman, 2016). This approach aligns with Youth Work principles, which emphasise participation and voice, although the research design itself is not a direct application of Youth Work practice (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Youth Work is underpinned by a commitment to empowerment and relational practice, alongside recognising individuals as active participants in their own development (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). Therefore, a qualitative methodology is appropriate as it reflects the profession's emphasis on understanding perspectives within complex social settings.

Since the research question focuses on how Youth Workers respond to mental health challenges linked to social media use, qualitative methods help explore how practitioners understand these challenges and apply their professional values in practice (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This is especially important in Youth Work, where practice is shaped by relational dynamics, ethical decision-making and the context in which practitioners work (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Qualitative approaches also align with Youth Work values, including empowerment, participation and reflective practice (Jeffs and Smith, 2010), ensuring the study remains consistent with professional standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). Closed questions and rating scales were also included to capture general patterns in participants' experiences; however, these were used to support, not replace the detailed qualitative responses (Bryman, 2016).

Whilst a quantitative approach may have measured trends, it would not have provided enough depth to explore how Youth Workers understand and respond to social media pressures, as large-scale surveys often miss the meanings and contextual experiences of practitioners and young people (Livingstone and Smith, 2014). Therefore, a qualitative approach was selected to provide a more detailed understanding of practice-based insights.

3.3 Methods

The primary method used to collect data was an online questionnaire containing open-ended and closed questions (Appendix 1). This method was chosen as it allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words, which directly relates to the research question (O’Leary, 2021).

Questionnaires can combine open-ended and closed questions, allowing researchers to collect descriptive and structured data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In qualitative research, open ended questions are valuable as they allow participants to describe their experiences in more depth (Bryman, 2016). Using a questionnaire also enabled practitioners to reflect on their professional experiences, aligning with the reflective practice principles central to Youth Work (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

An online questionnaire increased accessibility for participants across Wales, enabling them to complete the questionnaire at a convenient time. This was particularly important because Youth Work roles often involve irregular working hours (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). It was also suitable for this small scale, time-limited study as it allowed data to be collected efficiently (Robson, 2002; O’Leary, 2021).

The questionnaire included open ended questions, multiple choice questions and short rating scales, exploring participants’ roles, their experience working with 11-14-year-olds, and their responses to social media related issues (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Additional questions examined practitioners’ confidence and organisational support (Bryman, 2016) and the questions were reviewed by the researcher’s supervisor to ensure clarity and ethical appropriateness.

Participation was voluntary and no identifying information was collected, unless participants chose to provide contact details for follow-up purposes, ensuring anonymity and reducing professional risk.

A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) and supporting participant documentation is included in the appendices to ensure transparency and allow for evaluation of the research design.

Although the ethics form (Appendix 2) included the possibility of a semi-structured follow-up interview, this was not carried out due to time and word count limitations. As a result, the online questionnaire was the only method used, which was a practical decision but also limits the depth that could have been achieved if the follow up interview method was used.

Sample Size

The study used purposive sampling to recruit individuals with relevant experience working with young people aged 11-14 years. This ensured participants had direct professional insight into Youth Work or Youth Work support settings relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2016; Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

An expected sample size of six to eight participants was considered appropriate for the scale of this study; however, ten practitioners took part. This was manageable for qualitative analysis while still providing a broader range of perspectives.

Qualitative research prioritises depth of understanding rather than large samples (Creswell and Creswell, 2017), and this sample size was appropriate for this small-scale dissertation project (Bryman, 2016).

However, recruiting participants through professional networks may lead to bias, as participants may share similar experiences or perspectives, which could limit how varied the responses are.

Participants were recruited through professional networks, and pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity. Participant profiles are presented in Chapter 4, but the sample size may not fully reflect the diversity of Youth Work practice across Wales.

Data Analysis

In this study, data was analysed using a combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Closed questions were summarised to identify general patterns, while open-ended responses were analysed using thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research to identify and interpret patterns within data, making it suitable for exploring participants' experiences (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

The analysis followed six stages: familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun and Clarke, 2007). Codes were identified from meaningful sections of the data and grouped into broader themes, supporting a clear and structured interpretation of findings. However, thematic analysis involves researcher judgement, meaning different themes may be identified by different researchers, which highlights the importance of transparency in the analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2017).

This is particularly relevant in this study as the researcher has a background in Youth Work, which may influence how data is interpreted. Being aware of their own influence was

therefore important to ensure findings remained grounded in participant responses rather than researcher assumptions. This structured approach aligned with the research aim by supporting pattern identification and deeper exploration of participants' experiences.

3.4 Research Considerations

Several factors shaped the research design. Time limits and project scale led to the use of a single qualitative method, as mixed methods or interviews could have added more depth but were not feasible within the timeframe and word count (O'Leary, 2021).

The researcher's background in Youth Work helped shape relevant questions but they remained mindful of their own influence to avoid bias, which is important when researching issues related to their own professional field (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; O'Leary, 2021).

This highlights the importance of ensuring that participants' responses are represented accurately rather than shaped by the researcher's assumptions (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The online format also improved accessibility and participation across different professional contexts in Wales (Ofcom, 2023). However, it may have reduced depth of engagement compared to face-to-face methods.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's (UWTSD) ethics committee before data collection. The study followed British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2024) ethical guidelines, UWTSD procedures

and Youth Work standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). These frameworks ensured the research was carried out in a way that protected participants and maintained ethical practice throughout the study.

Participant information, consent and the questionnaire are included in Appendix 1 as they are all included in the Microsoft Form, while the ethics application form is included in Appendix 2 to ensure transparency within the research process. Although the ethics application included the option of a follow-up semi-structured interview, this was not undertaken due to time constraints. Therefore, data collection was limited to an online questionnaire.

Participants received an information sheet (Appendix 1) at the beginning of the questionnaire, outlining the purpose of the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent (Appendix 1) was also obtained electronically before participating, ensuring that participants understood the purpose of the research and agreed to take part voluntarily (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Bryman, 2016).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. No identifiable personal information was collected unless participants voluntarily chose to provide contact details for a follow up interview. All data was stored securely on password protected devices and pseudonyms were used during reporting to protect participant identity. All ethical procedures outlined in the original ethics application (Appendix 2), including informed consent, participant confidentiality, anonymity, and secure data storage, were fully implemented.

However, within small and interconnected Youth Work settings, full anonymity cannot always be guaranteed due to the close nature of professional networks. This creates a potential risk of indirect identification, even where names and identifying details are

removed. To reduce this risk, reasonable steps were taken to avoid including unnecessary information that could lead to participant identification while maintaining the accuracy of responses.

3.6 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. The small sample size means findings cannot be generalised beyond the participating Youth Work settings in Wales. However, qualitative research prioritises depth of understanding rather than generalising results (Bryman, 2016; Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Using an online questionnaire limits opportunities to explore responses in depth compared to interviews, which allow richer qualitative data (Bryman, 2016). Time limits also restricted wider recruitment and additional methods.

The researcher's background may have influenced interpretation despite reflective practice. However, the methodology is appropriate for addressing the study's aims, providing useful practice-based insights while recognising its limitations (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework used in this study, including research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, and thematic analysis approach. Limitations such as sample size and time constraints were acknowledged.

Overall, the methodology used is appropriate for gathering rich, practice-based insights into how Youth Workers respond to social media-related mental health challenges among young people. At the same time, using only one method and a small sample size means the findings are more specific to this study and may not reflect the experiences of a wider population. The following chapter presents the findings of the study.

4. PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from a questionnaire completed by practitioners working with young people aged 11-14 years, focusing on how they identify and respond to social media related wellbeing concerns in practice.

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) generated quantitative and qualitative data. Closed questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, while open-ended responses were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

This chapter is organised into sections covering participant characteristics, observed social media issues, practitioner confidence levels, training experiences, organisational support and thematic findings. Interpretation is provided in Chapter 5.

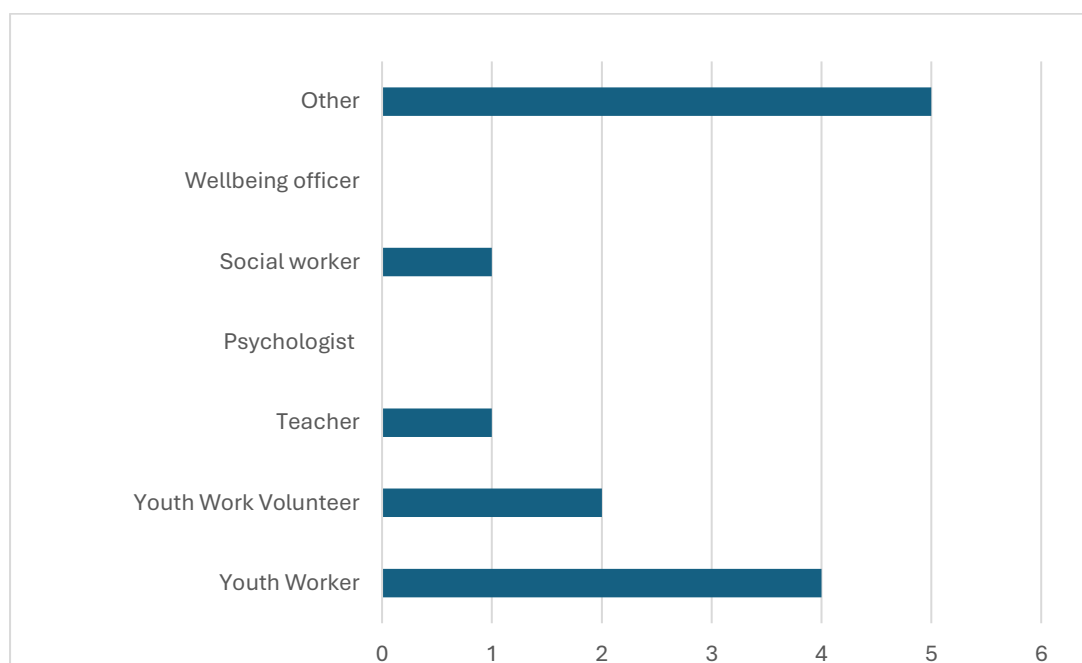
4.2 data presentation

Participant characteristics

This section outlines the professional background and experience of participants to give context to the findings.

Participants represented a range of roles across Youth Work and related sectors. Most identified as Youth Workers or Youth Work volunteers, with additional roles in social care and other wellbeing focused roles, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Professional roles of participants

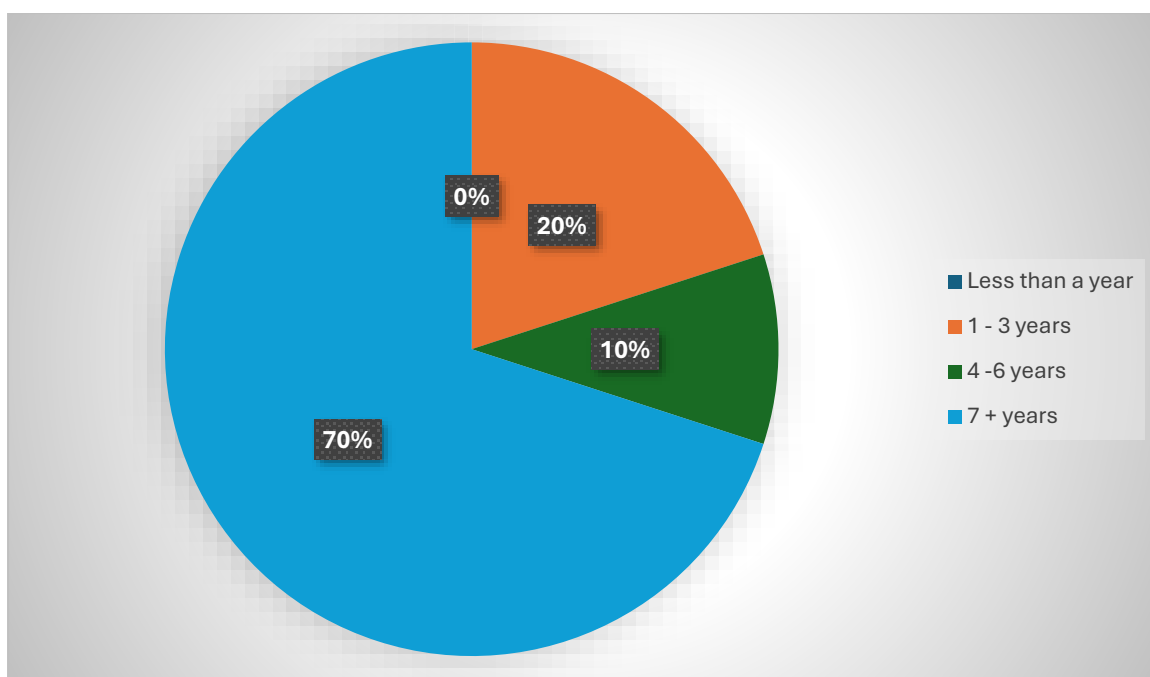


The category “Other” included roles such as teaching assistants, participation officers and wellbeing focused roles, including a smoking and wellbeing practitioner and a social worker. Although these roles were outside formal Youth Work, all involved direct work supporting young people.

Participants' experience

Participants' experience working with young people aged 11-14 years varied. Most participants reported over seven years of experience, while a smaller number reported between one and six years, as shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Years of experience working with young people

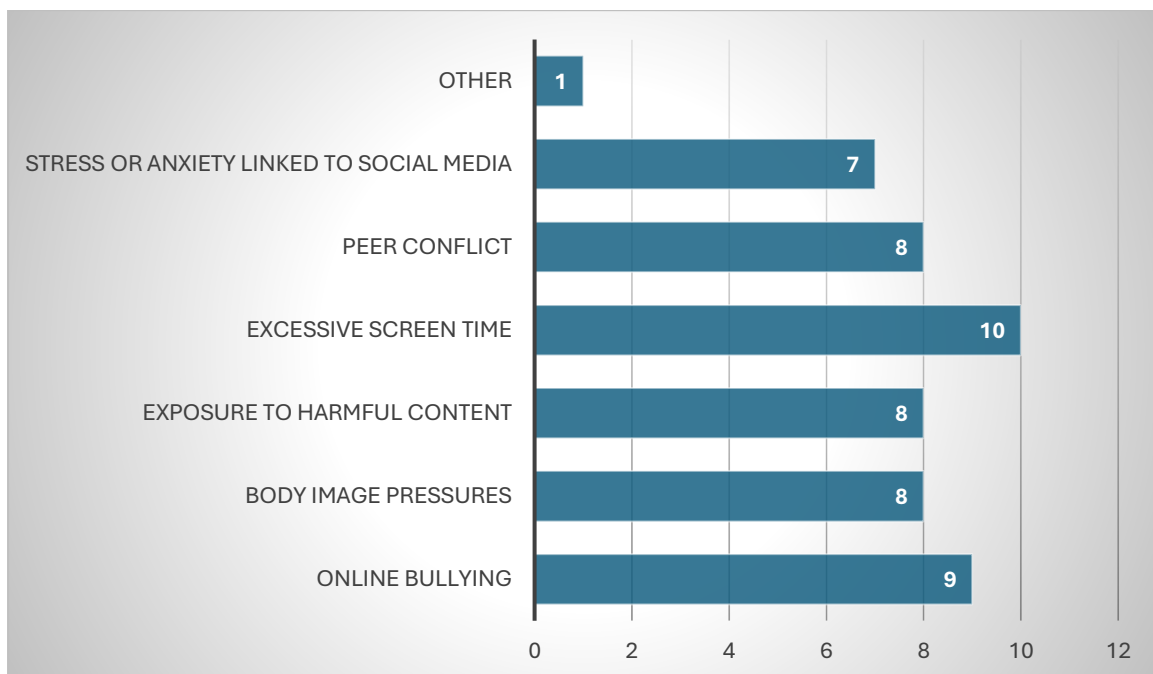


Social media issues observed

This section presents the key social media-related issues reported by participants as seen in Figure 4.3.

All ten participants reported excessive screen time as an issue among young people aged 11-14 years. Online bullying was identified by nine participants. Body image pressures, exposure to harmful content, and peer conflict were reported by eight participants. Stress or anxiety linked to social media use was reported by seven participants. One participant selected “other”, indicating that all listed issues were relevant. Many participants identified more than one issue within individual responses.

Figure 4.3: Social media issues reported by participants

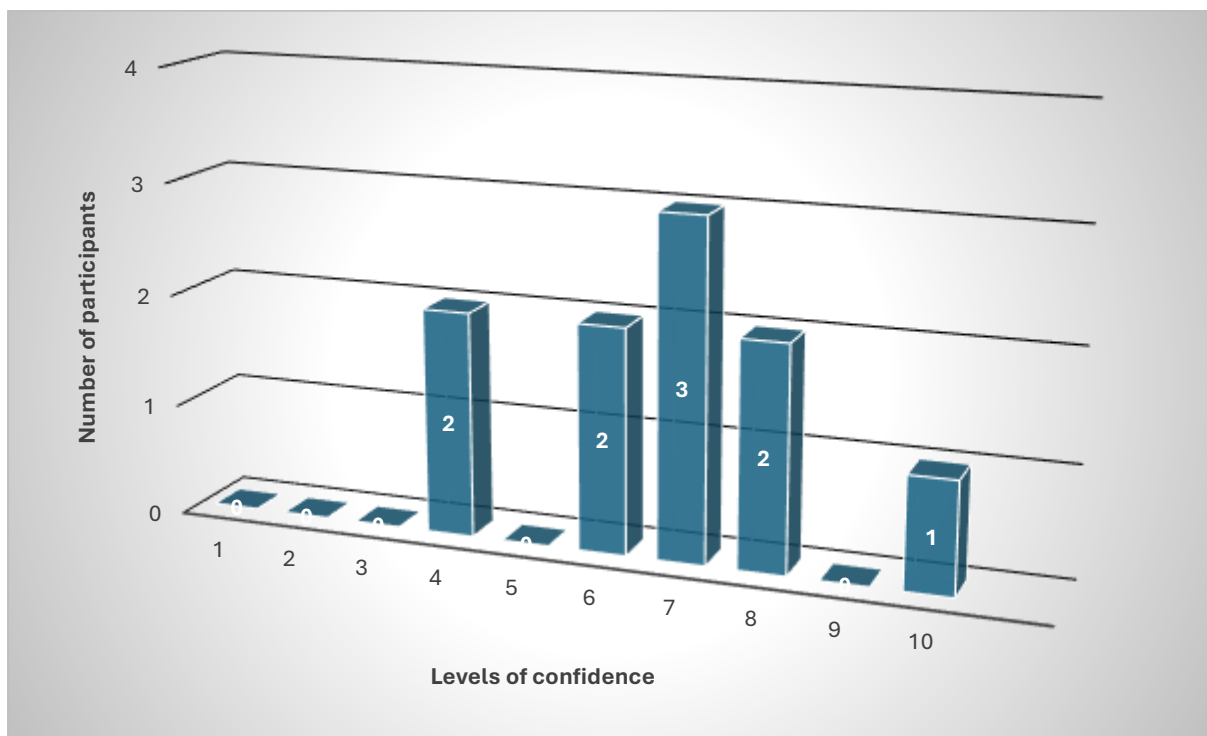


Participant confidence in supporting digital wellbeing

Participants were asked to rate their confidence in supporting young people's digital wellbeing on a scale from 0 (not confident) to 10 (very confident).

Figure 4.4 presents participants' confidence ratings. Responses ranged from 4 to 10, with most ratings falling between 6 and 8.

Figure 4.4: Confidence ratings

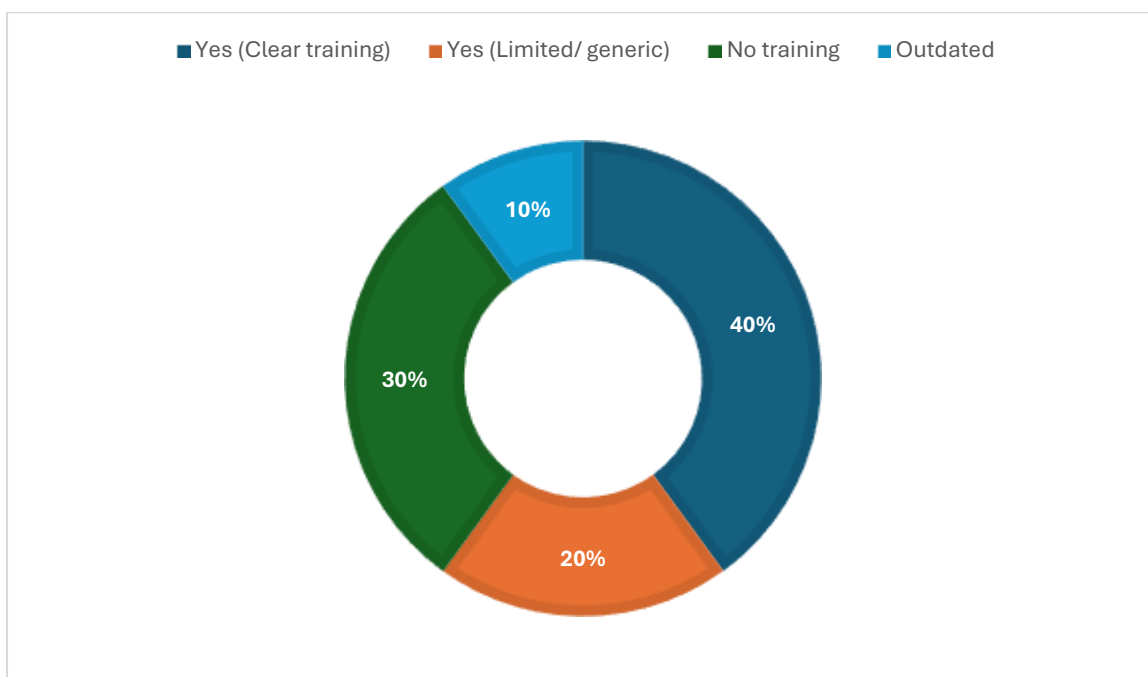


Training in digital wellbeing and online safety

This section presents participants' access to training, and how this is related to digital wellbeing.

Most participants reported receiving some form of training in digital wellbeing or online safety. Others reported no training or described training as limited, outdated or lacking practical application in Youth Work settings, as shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Training coverage



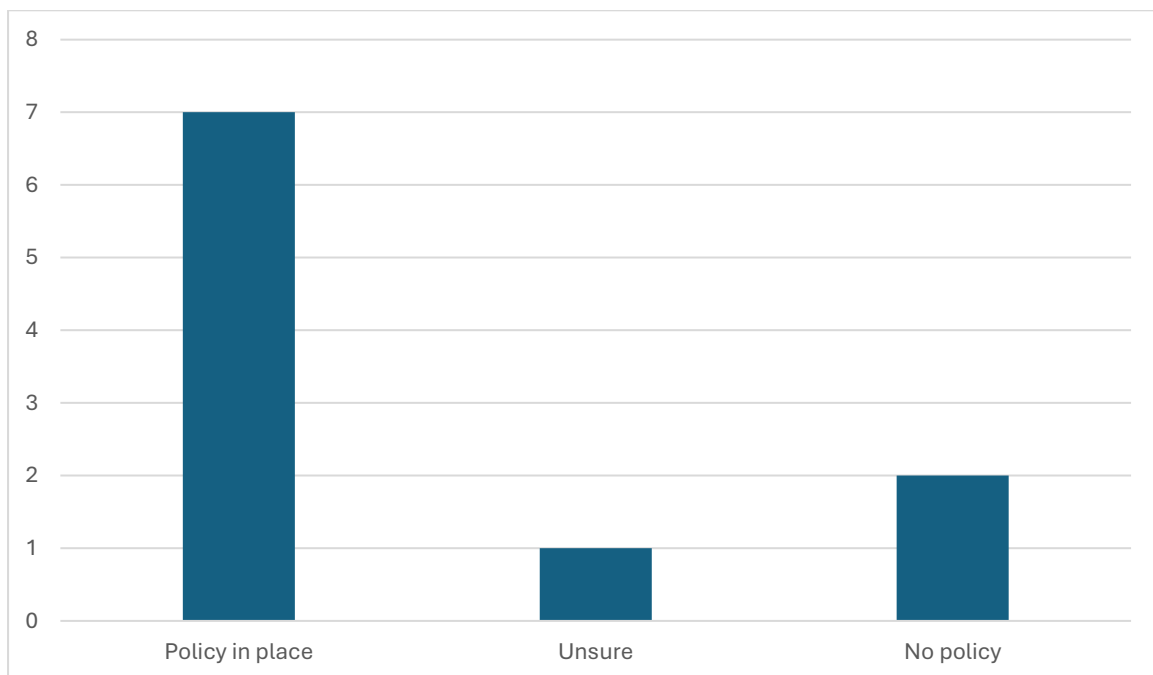
Organisational Policies and resources

Participants were asked about the availability of organisational policies relating to digital wellbeing and online safety.

Most participants reported that relevant policies were in place within their organisations.

Some reported that no policy existed, that they were unsure about current guidance, or that policies were limited in effectiveness in practice, as shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Organisational policies



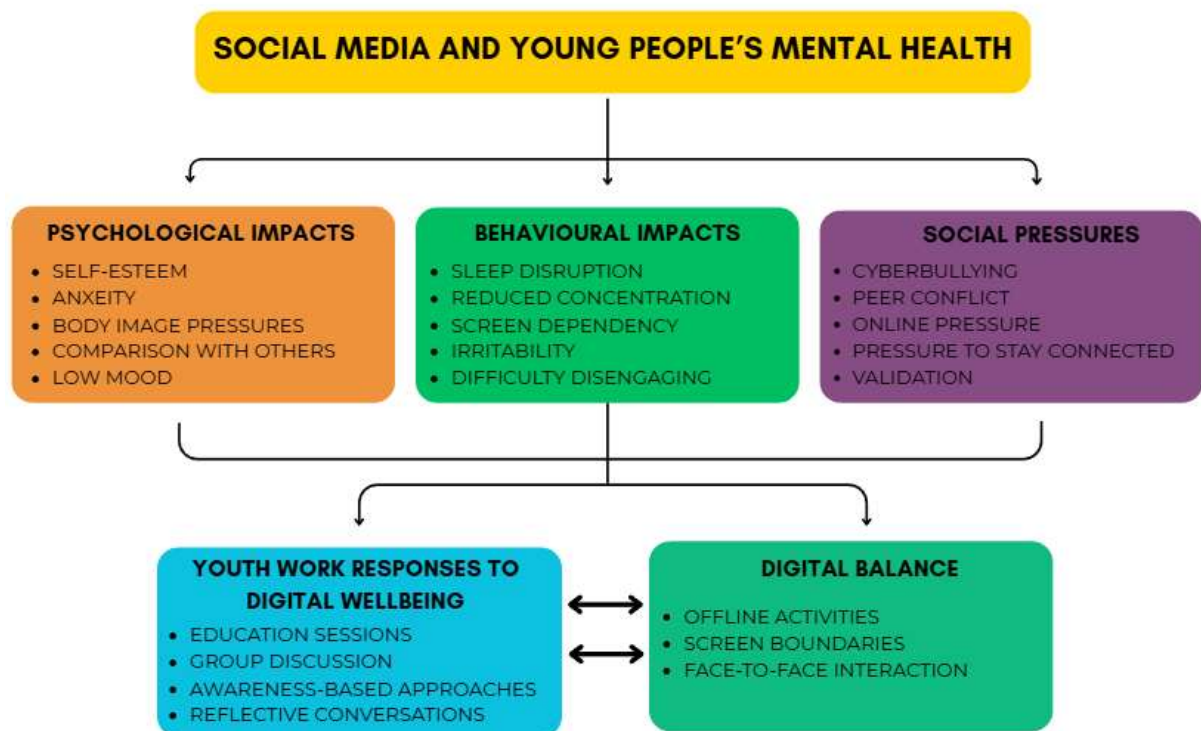
Thematic analysis of participant perspectives

Qualitative responses were analysed using thematic analysis, resulting in five key themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). These themes reflect participants' reported observations of social media use and the ways in which they respond to related wellbeing challenges in practice. Thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret patterns within the data, with themes developed from participants' responses and guided by the research questions and structure of the questionnaire.

Table 4.1: Summary of themes

Theme	Description
Psychological impacts	Anxiety, self-esteem issues and body image pressures.
Behavioural impacts	Sleep disruption, screen dependency, reduced concentration and irritability.
Social pressures	Cyberbullying, peer conflict, pressure to remain connected and online pressure.
Youth Work responses	Informal educational, group discussions, raising awareness and role modelling.
Digital balance	Encouraging offline activities and managing screen time.

Figure 4.7: Thematic map of identified themes



Psychological impacts

Participants reported that social media is linked to changes in young people's emotional wellbeing, including effects on self-esteem, confidence, and comparison with others online. Many responses also highlighted anxiety, low mood and body image concerns.

For example, one participant noted that "...young people's self-esteem and confidence [can make] them feel pressure to look and act a certain way" (Participant 2). Similar responses were reported by multiple participants.

Behavioural impacts

Participants described behavioural changes associated with social media use, including disrupted sleep patterns, reduced concentration, longer periods of engagement, and irritability when access to devices is restricted. Some responses also referred to difficulties disengaging from social media and reduced participation in offline activities.

Participant 9 stated that “Many teachers report fatigue as young people are staying up late on line, with little or no monitoring on content or time limits.” Other responses also referred to being screen dependent and difficulty disengaging from devices.

Social pressures and online conflict

Participants reported social pressures linked to online interaction, including cyberbullying, peer conflict, and pressure to remain connected and experiences of comparison through online content and feedback such as likes and comments. Some responses also mentioned that offline conflict continues online.

Another participant explained that “...arguments often continue online and escalate quickly.” (Participant 3). Similar responses were identified across participants.

Youth Work responses to digital wellbeing

Participants described a range of approaches used to support young people, including group discussions, informal education, raising awareness activities and promoting critical thinking about online content.

Participant 6 stated “I always try to encourage young people to question what they are looking at and to take a break when we are all in youth club.” Other responses also referred to role modelling, education sessions and the use of boundaries such as screen time guidance.

Limitations of the Data

For this small study, a total of 10 respondents completed the questionnaire. Of these, 9 answered all the questions, and 1 answered most questions. The responses varied in length and detail, which is common in questionnaire-based research and may limit the depth of data (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, as the data is self-reported, responses are subjective by the nature of self-reporting. Overall, the small sample size limits how widely the findings can be applied within Youth Work contexts.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the questionnaire completed by individuals working with young people aged 11-14 years. It has outlined participant characteristics, key social media-related issues, participants’ confidence, training and policy contexts, and themes identified through qualitative analysis. The findings show that participants report a range of psychological concerns, behavioural patterns, and social challenges linked to social media use among young people, alongside variation in training and organisational support. These findings address the research question and will be explored further in Chapter 5, alongside the existing literature and Youth Work practice.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings from Chapter 4 in relation to the research question: *How do Youth Workers in Wales address mental health challenges linked to social media use among 11-14-year-olds?* It examines what the findings reveal about young people's experiences, practitioner responses, and the wider context of digital wellbeing within Youth Work practice. The discussion focuses on key patterns across psychological, behavioural, and social impacts, and considers how these findings align with, extend, or challenge existing literature and Youth Work theory.

5.2 Themes

Key pattern across themes

A key pattern across all themes is that social media is not experienced as the only harm factor, but as part of wider social, emotional and environmental contexts. Across psychological, behavioural and social impacts, practitioners consistently described digital engagement as woven with peer relationships, school pressures, family contexts and stages of adolescent development.

This reinforces Orben and Przybylski's (2019) argument that the relationship between digital engagement and wellbeing is highly context dependent rather than being only negative or positive. Importantly, this suggests that focusing only on screen time or platform use risks oversimplifying young peoples lived experiences.

Psychological and emotional impacts

The findings indicate that practitioners regularly observe psychological impacts associated with social media use, especially around anxiety, self-esteem, and body image concerns. These were often linked to social comparison, where young people compare themselves with unrealistic or edited images of others online. This aligns with existing literature which identifies social comparison as one of the key ways digital engagement can affect adolescent wellbeing (Nesi, 2020; Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022).

However, the findings also highlight variability in experience. Some young people were described as using social media for reassurance, connection, and identity exploration, suggesting that digital spaces can also function as supportive environments (Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022). This reinforces the importance of a person-centred approach within Youth Work practice (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019), recognising that similar digital environments can produce very different emotional outcomes depending on individual context and vulnerability.

Overall, these findings reinforce Orben and Przybylski's (2019) argument that the relationship between digital engagement and wellbeing is highly context dependent. Social media does not affect all young people in the same way, but instead interacts with existing emotional states, social environments, and individual vulnerabilities. This further strengthens the need for Youth Workers to respond to individual experience rather than relying on generalised assumptions about digital harm or benefit.

Behavioural impacts and digital engagement

Behavioural impacts included disrupted sleep patterns, extended screen use, reduced concentration and irritability when offline. While this reflects existing literature discussed in Chapter 2, linking excessive digital engagement to sleep disruption (Viner *et al.*, 2019), the data suggests these behaviours are not caused by social media alone.

Instead, the findings suggest that these behaviours appear connected to wider factors such as school pressures, how young people communicate with peers, and accessibility of devices within everyday life. This supports Boers *et al.* (2019), who argue that behavioural outcomes are influenced by multiple interacting factors not only on digital exposure.

Importantly, practitioners also observed that young people demonstrate awareness of their digital habits, including attempts to self-regulate screen use. This suggests that adolescents may have some agency in how they use social media, even when patterns appear excessive. This is significant for Youth Work practice, as it indicates the importance of supporting reflective decision-making rather than focusing on restriction or control, aligning with strengths-based Youth Work approaches whilst recognising the wider pressures facing Youth Work provision today (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Davies, 2019).

Social pressures and peer relationships

Social impacts included cyberbullying, peer conflict, and pressure to remain constantly connected. Practitioners frequently interpreted these as extensions of offline relationships, which aligns with Viner *et al.* (2019), who argue that online harms often reflect existing social dynamics. Similarly, the data supports Przybylski and Weinstein's (2017, p. 205)

“Goldilocks hypothesis” suggesting that the impact of digital engagement is not straightforward, and moderate use may be neutral or beneficial depending on the context.

Overall, this suggests that social media appears to function as a relational space where peer dynamics are intensified rather than created. This concept shifts away from risk-based ideas that place the platforms themselves at the centre of the problem. Instead, it highlights the need to use professional judgement that looks beyond online behaviour and considers the relationships and tensions that may already exist underneath it. This reinforces the need for Youth Work practice that focuses on relationships, contexts and emotional literacy.

Youth Work responses and professional practice

Practitioners reported using relational and informal approaches to support digital wellbeing, such as group discussions, reflective activities, and educational conversations around online experience. These approaches reflect core Youth Work principles of participation, empowerment, and voluntary engagement (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). This reflects a strengths-based approach, where young people are supported to critically reflect on their digital experiences rather than being directly controlled. Such approaches position Youth Work as an educative and supportive space for navigating digital life (Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

However, the findings also highlight inconsistency in practitioner confidence and training.

While practitioners generally reported feeling confident, this was often based on experience rather than formal training. This suggests inconsistency in how digital wellbeing is supported across Youth Work settings. This finding is particularly significant given the increasing importance of digital wellbeing within Youth Work practice.

Digital balance and wellbeing approaches

Another clear theme was the idea of balance between online and offline activities. Practitioners described encouraging engagement in sports, creative activities, alongside opportunities for face-to-face interaction as ways of supporting wellbeing. This reflects literature suggesting that digital wellbeing is not defined by screen time alone, but by the quality and balance of engagement (Valkenburg, Meier and Beyens, 2022). However, the concept of balance may look different for each young person, as appropriate levels of engagement can vary from one young person to another.

5.3 Synthesis of findings

Across all themes, the findings demonstrate that adolescent digital wellbeing is relational, contextual, and shaped by ongoing development. Social media is not a direct cause of harm but interacts with young people's emotional states, peer relationships, and wider environmental pressures. This challenges more risk-based narratives and supports a more balanced Youth Work perspective that recognises the risks and opportunities within digital engagement.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has explored what the findings mean in relation to existing literature and Youth Work practice, demonstrating that while social media is linked to a range of challenges, the impact is not the same for everyone and is shaped by wider context. Overall, the findings highlight that digital wellbeing is influenced by complex interactions between online and offline environments, reinforcing the importance of relational Youth Work practice. They

also indicate that practitioner responses are shaped by experience and organisational context, with a need for more consistent training and support across the sector.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the key findings of the study and reflects on what they mean for Youth Work practice in Wales. It returns to the research question: *How do Youth Workers in Wales address mental health challenges linked to social media use among 11-14-year-olds?* It also outlines the wider implications of the study and highlights areas for future research.

6.2 Summary of key findings

The findings indicate that Youth Workers identify social media as being linked to emotional wellbeing concerns, behavioural changes and social pressures, particularly anxiety, self-esteem, sleep disruption and peer conflict. However, a key outcome of this study is that these impacts varied depending on individual circumstances, their environment, and their stage of development.

Behavioural patterns such as sleep disruption, high screen use, and reduced concentration were also reported, but were often understood as part of wider routines shaped by school pressures, peer relationships, and every day digital life. Similarly, social challenges such as cyberbullying and peer conflict were also identified, with some practitioners suggesting that online issues often reflected existing tensions between young people that continued or escalated online.

In practice, Youth Workers described using relational and informal approaches to support young people, including open conversation, reflective activities, and prompting a more balanced relationship between their online and offline lives. These approaches align with

Youth Work principles of participation, empowerment, and relationship-based practice (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

6.3 Conclusions and interpretations

Overall, the findings suggest that social media should not be understood as a direct cause of mental health difficulties, but as one part of a wider set of factors in young people's lives.

This supports current literature which argues that the relationship between digital engagement and wellbeing is complex and shaped by context (Orben and Przybylski, 2019).

The study also reinforces that Youth Work plays an important role in supporting how young people understand and respond to their digital experiences. Relational practice creates space for conversation, which can support young people to become more aware of their emotions and behaviour online. This reinforces the importance of informal education and person-centred approaches within Youth Work practice (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

However, the findings also indicate inconsistency across the sector. While many practitioners reported feeling confident in supporting digital wellbeing, this was often based on experience rather than formal training. This suggests that while Youth Work is actively responding to digital wellbeing in practice, this area of practice remains underdeveloped in a structured or consistent way.

6.4 Implications for Youth Work practice

The findings indicate that digital wellbeing should now be understood as a core part of Youth Work practice and can no longer be viewed as a secondary issue. Practitioners are regularly supporting young people with complex experiences linked to social media, yet the level of training and support available does not always reflect this. Many practitioners rely on personal experience rather than structured learning, which can lead to differences in confidence and in the support provided.

This suggests a need for more consistent and up-to-date training that reflects the realities of Youth Work practice. Training should move beyond general online safety and instead focus on the emotional, relational, and developmental aspects of digital wellbeing, enabling practitioners to respond in a more informed and confident way. Strengthening this area may also support earlier intervention and more consistent safeguarding responses (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022).

At an organisational level, the findings suggest that while policies relating to digital safety may exist, their application in practice is not always clear or consistent. This indicates a need for clearer guidance and stronger integration of digital wellbeing within existing Youth Work frameworks, ensuring alignment between policy and everyday practice.

At a practice level, the findings reinforce the importance of relational and participatory approaches. Young people appear more responsive to support that is based on trust, open communication, and non-judgemental engagement, rather than restrictive approaches (Jeffs and Smith, 2010; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). Social media should therefore be understood as a risk and a resource, requiring a balanced approach that supports young people to navigate their online and offline lives.

Finally, the findings highlight the importance of developing digital resilience within Youth Work practice. Supporting young people to critically engage with online content, manage emotional responses, and navigate digital relationships reflects a preventative and strengths-based approach aligned with core Youth Work principles.

6.5 Recommendations

Practitioner development

- Provide consistent, up-to-date training focused on digital wellbeing in Youth Work contexts
- Develop training that addresses the emotional, relational, and developmental aspects of digital wellbeing alongside online safety.

Organisational support

- Develop clearer and more accessible policies and frameworks to support consistent responses to digital wellbeing issues
- Embed digital wellbeing clearly within Youth Work safeguarding and practice guidance

Practice development

- Integrate digital resilience into everyday Youth Work practice (identity, boundaries, emotional awareness)
- Maintain relational, non-judgemental approaches that encourage open communication

6.6 Future research

Future research may benefit from prioritising young people's own perspectives, as this would provide a clearer understanding of how they experience social media in their everyday lives, and what support they find beneficial. Practitioners' insight can be valuable, but they only represent one part of the picture. This aligns with core Youth Work values, where emphasis is placed on lived experience and ensuring that young people's voices remain at the centre, instead of being understood only through a professional lens.

Longitudinal research would also be helpful to explore how social media use and its impact on subjective wellbeing change over time, particularly during early adolescence. Further research could also encompass a wider range of Youth Work settings across Wales, including rural and under-resourced areas, where access to support may differ.

Additionally, future studies could also examine organisational factors in more depth, including how training, leadership, and policy influence how digital wellbeing is addressed in practice. Exploring these areas could support a more thorough understanding of how Youth Work can respond effectively to digital challenges.

6.7 Final reflection

This research has highlighted the complexity of understanding social media in young people's lives and the important role Youth Workers play in supporting digital wellbeing. Rather than viewing social media as completely positive or negative, the findings suggest that its impact is shaped by a combination of emotional, social, and developmental factors (Odgers and Jensen, 2020).

Although small in scale, the study provides a grounded insight into how practitioners understand and respond to these challenges in practice, contributing to an area of Youth Work that remains underexplored within Wales.

As digital environments continue to evolve, Youth Work practice may also need to adapt alongside them. Strengthening practitioner confidence, improving guidance, and maintaining relational practice may help ensure that young people are supported in ways that remain relevant and meaningful. In this way, Youth Work can continue to respond effectively to changing digital experiences while remaining grounded in young people's everyday lives.

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APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Participant information form and questionnaire

Social media and digital wellbeing in young people (11-14 years old)

Please read before taking part

You are invited to take part in a short questionnaire exploring 'Youth Workers and other practitioners' experiences of supporting young people aged 11-14 in relation to social media and digital wellbeing.

The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time before submitting your responses. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to.

Your responses will be anonymous and confidential. Please do not include any names of young people, colleagues, or organisations. All data will be stored securely and used only for my undergraduate dissertation, in line with the UWTSD university ethical guidelines.

This study has received approval through the university ethics process.

By selecting Yes, you confirm that:

- You have read and understood the information above
- You are aged 18 or over
- You voluntarily agree to take part in this study

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:

Linos Davies - 2312645@student.uwtsg.ac.uk

1. I have read the participant information and understand the purpose of this study.
(Choose yes to continue or no to end here). *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. What is your current role or profession?

- ☐ Youth Worker
- ☐ Youth Work volunteer
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Psychologist
- ☐ Social worker
- ☐ Wellbeing officer
- ☐ Other

3. How long have you worked with young people aged 11-14?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7+ years

4. What types of social media related issues do you most see young people experiencing?
(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Online bullying
- ☐ Body image pressures
- ☐ Exposure to harmful content
- ☐ Excessive screen time
- ☐ Peer conflict
- ☐ Stress or anxiety linked to social media
- ☐ Other

5. In your own words, how does social media affect young people's emotional wellbeing or behaviour?

Enter your answer

6. What strategies, tools or approaches do you use to support young people with digital wellbeing?

Enter your answer

7. How confident do you feel supporting young people with digital wellbeing or social media concerns?

(0= not confident at all, 10= very confident).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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8. Have you received any training related to digital wellbeing or online safety?
Yes/ No/ Unsure

(If yes, was it helpful?)

Enter your answer

9. Does your organisation have policies or resources to support digital wellbeing? Yes/ No/ Unsure

(If yes, how effective are they in practice?)

Enter your answer

10. Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview to discuss your views in more detail?

(If yes, please provide your email address (optional))

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other

11. Please enter your email address here if you agree to take part in a follow up interview

Enter your answer

8.2 Appendix 2: Application for ethical approval

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Llinos Davies			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Education and Humanities, Academic Discipline of Childhood, Youth and Education.
4	Campus:	UWTSD Trinity Saint David Carmarthen
5	E-mail address:	2312645@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07415088625
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2312645
8	Programme of Study:	BA Young people, Communities and Youth Work
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Angharad Lewis/Alana Enoch

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☒	Alana Enoch 4/12/2025	

	source prior to seeking ethical approval			
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SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.		
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice		☐
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy		☐
3	<i>National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019)</i>		☒
4	<i>BERA (2024)</i>		☒
5	<i>UNCRC (1989)</i>		☒
6	<i>Youth Work in Wales: Principles and purposes (2022)</i>		☒
7	<i>National Youth Work Strategy for Wales. (WG, 2019)</i>		☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	N/A				
2	Contact person name	N/A				
3	Contact person e-mail address	N/A				
4	Is your research externally funded?		YES	☐	NO	☒
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?		YES	☐	NO	☒
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☒
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☒
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☒
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy)	YES	☐	NO	☐

		If NO the application cannot continue				
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Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	How do Welsh Youth Workers Address Mental Health Challenges Linked to Social Media Use Among 11–14-Year-Olds			
2	Proposed start date:	5 th January 2026	Proposed end date:	7 th May 2026	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of this research is to develop a clearer understanding of how Youth Workers in Wales support young people aged 11-14 in managing the emotional and psychological effects of social media. Young people's online experiences increasingly shape their identities, relationships and overall wellbeing (HAIDT, 2024). This research aims to capture practitioners' real-world perspectives rather than relying on assumptions or generalised narratives about social media use. A main purpose is to explore how Youth Workers understand digital wellbeing, including recognising early signs of distress and distinguishing between everyday online frustrations and more serious emotional difficulties. The research will explore how practitioners perceive digital pressures such as comparison, cyber conflict, exposure to harmful content or unrealistic standards, and how these pressures show				

	up in their work with young people. This will provide insight into the ways practitioners assess, respond to, and prioritise online wellbeing concerns. Another key purpose is to understand how Youth Work values and informal education methods influence digital wellbeing support. Focusing on how conversations, relational trust, reflective activities and creative forms of engagement help young people to develop safer, more confident digital behaviours. These practices align with the value-led, educative ethos outlined in the Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022) and align with wider professional expectations set out within sector guidance (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). The research also seeks to identify areas where practitioners feel confident, as well as barriers that limit their ability to support young people effectively. The overall aim is to generate practical, evidence-informed insights that strengthen professional reflection and help Youth Workers respond to the evolving digital realities young people face. Reference list CLD Standards Scotland (2019) <i>Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS)</i>. Available at: https://www.youthworkwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/youth_work_national_occupational_standards_1_.pdf Haidt, J. (2024) <i>The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness</i>. New York: Penguin Press. Youth Work in Wales Review Group (2022) <i>Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes</i>. Cardiff: Youth Work in Wales Review Group. Available at: https://www.cwvys.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YOUTH-WORK-IN-WALES-2022-ENGLISH.pdf
4	Research Question How do Welsh Youth Workers Address Mental Health Challenges Linked to Social Media Use Among 11–14-Year-Olds (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity The first aim of this research is to develop a clearer understanding of how Youth Work practitioners and other professionals support young people aged 11-14 in navigating the impacts of social media on their mental health and general wellbeing. This reflects the need to explore the everyday challenges that arise as digital environments influence young people's emotions, relationships and sense of identity (HAIDT, 2024). A second aim is to explore how practitioners understand and define digital wellbeing within their roles. This includes understanding how they perceive the emotional, social and behavioural pressures associated with online platforms and how these perceptions shape the ways they assess, make decisions and prioritise concerns. In doing so, the research aims to highlight how practitioners' professional judgement, safeguarding duties and understanding of the issues work together when addressing digital stress or online risks (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019, p.5).

	Another aim is to investigate the strategies and informal education methods practitioners use to support young people experiencing online challenges. This includes exploring how conversations, relational and group work, reflective activities and wider informal learning approaches contribute to digital wellbeing support, while also identifying effective practices and the practical constraints that may limit practitioners' capacity to offer sustained guidance (Jeffs and Smith, 2009). A further aim is to examine how Youth Work values such as participation, inclusion, empowerment and voluntary engagement shape the way digital wellbeing support is being delivered. This involves assessing whether these remain meaningful within digital contexts and how they are adapted to help young people reflect on and manage their online experiences (WG, 2019). The final aim is to strengthen professional reflection by identifying strong practice, gaps in support and opportunities for development. By presenting these insights clearly, the research aims to contribute to wider sector learning and to support the ongoing growth of Youth Work practice as digital wellbeing challenges continue to emerge (WG, 2019). Reference list CLD Standards Scotland (2019) <i>Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS)</i>. Available at: https://www.youthworkwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/youth_work_national_occupational_standards_1.pdf Haidt, J. (2024) <i>The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness</i>. New York: Penguin Press. Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. (2009) <i>Informal Education: Conversation, Democracy and Learning</i>. Revised edn. Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press. Welsh Government (2019) <i>Youth Work Strategy for Wales</i>. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-10/youth-work-strategy-for-wales.pdf Youth Work in Wales Review Group (2022) <i>Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes</i>. Cardiff: Youth Work in Wales Review Group. Available at: https://www.cwvys.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YOUTH-WORK-IN-WALES-2022-ENGLISH.pdf (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity The first objective of this research is to explore how Youth Work practitioners and other professionals define and interpret digital wellbeing challenges when working with young people aged 11-14. This includes identifying the emotional, social and behavioural challenges that emerge from young people's engagement with social media, as well as recognising early signs of distress that practitioners notice in their daily practice. This aligns with safeguarding responsibilities outlined within the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (2019). A second objective is to identify the recurring digital patterns practitioners observe among young people. This includes recognising common themes such as online conflict, exposure to harmful or misleading content, pressure with online identity, and the emotional fluctuations linked to constant connectivity and comparison.

	Understanding these patterns supports broader sector priorities around early intervention and prevention, as highlighted in Welsh Government commitments to improving young people's wellbeing through proactive, relational support (WG, 2019) A further objective is to interpret how core Youth Work values such as inclusion, participation, empowerment and voluntary engagement are embedded within practitioners' accounts of digital wellbeing support. This involves analysing how these values guide decision-making, shape professional boundaries and enable young people to take an active role in conversations about their online lives. These commitments reflect the value-led practice outlined in Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022) and align with the participatory ethos of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). This objective also includes examining how practitioners describe the strategies they use when responding to digital wellbeing concerns, including conversations, reflective activities, informal education and creative approaches that promote safer, more confident digital engagement. The final objective is to bring together all findings into a clear thematic summary that identifies strengths, gaps and opportunities within current digital wellbeing support. The aim is to produce practical, evidence-informed insights that can guide reflection, enhance professional development and strengthen Youth Work practice across the sector. Reference list CLD Standards Scotland (2019) <i>Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS)</i>. Available at: https://www.youthworkwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/youth_work_national_occupational_standards_1_.pdf Welsh Government (2019) <i>Youth Work Strategy for Wales</i>. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-10/youth-work-strategy-for-wales.pdf Youth Work in Wales Review Group (2022) <i>Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes</i>. Cardiff: Youth Work in Wales Review Group. Available at: https://www.cwvys.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YOUTH-WORK-IN-WALES-2022-ENGLISH.pdf Unicef (1989) <i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>. Available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	This research will use a qualitative, mixed-method approach combining an online questionnaire with potentially one semi-structured interview. Qualitative research is used to explore meanings, experiences and interpretations, making it appropriate for

examining how practitioners understand and respond to digital wellbeing within Youth Work practice (Bryman, 2016). The use of an online questionnaire with open-ended questions allows practitioners to reflect on their experiences in their own words, while offering accessibility for participants (Braun and Clarke, 2022) Using two methods allows the project to collect broad patterns across practice and a more detailed, in-depth understanding of how practitioners conceive digital wellbeing and support young people with social media-related challenges (Bryman, 2016). The first method is an online questionnaire, created using a secure platform such as Microsoft Forms. The questionnaire will be sent to a mix of Youth Worker practitioners, volunteers, teachers, psychologist, social workers and wellbeing officers who currently work with young people aged 11-14 in Ceredigion, nearby areas or across Wales The questionnaire will include 5-6 questions, that will be a range of multiple-choice questions, rating scales and short open ended prompts. These questions will explore key areas such as how practitioners define digital wellbeing, the types of social media issues they encounter, their confidence in supporting young people, and the strategies or informal education methods they use. Participants will also be asked about training needs, professional boundaries, and how Youth Work values such as participation, inclusion, and empowerment influence their approaches in digital contexts. The questionnaire will be reviewed by the researcher's supervisor before distribution to ensure appropriateness and alignment with ethical expectations. Participation in the questionnaire will be voluntary, with an option to opt out at any stage or skip any questions. No identifiable information will be collected unless a participant chooses to volunteer for the follow up interview. The questionnaire is designed to capture perspectives without judgement or evaluation of their practice. The combination of rating scales and short qualitative prompts ensures responses are accessible for busy practitioners while still providing meaningful insight. At the end of the questionnaire, participants will be invited to specify whether they would like to take part in a semi-structured interview. Only one interview may be conducted to allow for an in-depth exploration without exceeding the timeframe or workload for the researcher. Those who volunteer will be asked for a preferred contact method, which will be stored separately from their questionnaire responses to maintain confidentiality. The semi-structured interview will last around 30 minutes and can take place online using a secure platform such as Microsoft Teams or in a private room within a Youth Work setting. It will follow a flexible guide from the questionnaire responses, covering topics such as practitioners understanding of digital pressures on young people, challenges they face when supporting digital wellbeing, examples of good practice, and how Youth Work values shape online engagement. The format allows the participant to speak openly while still ensuring all key areas are explored. With consent, the interview will be audio-recorded using a secure device. If the participant does not want a recording, detailed written notes will be taken instead. Audio files will be stored immediately to a password-protected folder and stored securely until transcription. Transcripts will replace any names or workplace identifiers with pseudonyms, and the original recording will be deleted after transcription. Across both methods, participants will be provided with clear information outlining the purpose of the research, their rights, and how their data will be stored and used. They will be reminded that the participation is voluntary, may be withdrawn at any time and

	carries no professional consequences. This approach ensures that the research collects meaningful, practical insights in a way that is ethical, respectful, and manageable for busy professionals. Reference list Bryman, A. 2016. <i>Social research methods</i>. Oxford university press. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	The questionnaires will be answered at a location of their choice on their own device. The potential interview may be held online via teams for convenience and accessibility, if not it will be located at a Youth Work setting. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☒	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☒	☐
15	A more equal Wales	☒	☐
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☒	☐
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒

18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	This research will relate to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by aligning with its core wellbeing goals, such as a healthier Wales, a more Resilient Wales, a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. It will contribute to a more resilient Wales by highlighting how Youth Work support and interventions can help young people develop coping strategies, digital resilience and confidence in navigating online environments, reducing vulnerability to harm and supporting long-term wellbeing (WG, 2015). It will also relate to a healthier Wales by exploring how Youth Workers support young people in managing the mental health and wellbeing challenges linked to social media. By exploring how practitioners recognise digital pressures, provide guidance, and build resilience, the study seeks to strengthen understanding of effective support for young people's emotional and psychological health WG, 2015). It will also relate to a more equal Wales by focusing on how Youth Work values such as participation, inclusion, empowerment, and voluntary engagement are applied in digital contexts. Exploring these values ensures that all young people, regardless of background, have fair access to guidance and support, helping to reduce differences in experiences and outcomes (Davies, 2013). The research will relate to a Wales of cohesive communities by exploring how Youth Workers encourage safe and positive online and offline relationships. By supporting young people to navigate social media confidently and responsibly, the research will highlight ways to foster connected, resilient communities where young people feel included and supported (WG, 2015). Reference list (2017) <i>Youth work in a changing policy landscape: The view from ...</i> Available at: https://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/bernard-davies-youth-work-in-a-changing-policy-landscape.pdf (Accessed: 07 December 2025). <i>Well-being of future generations act 2015 (2025) Future Generations Wales.</i> Available at: https://futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-act-2015/ (Accessed: 07 December 2025). (this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒

4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☐
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒

6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	6-8 for the questionnaire and one for the semi-structured interview. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	Youth Worker practitioners, Youth Work volunteers, teachers, psychologist, social workers and wellbeing officers. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	By using pseudonyms (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐

21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
No		☒	
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		

	Risk to participants: 1. Feel obligated to participate. 2. They may recall challenging experiences related to practice (trauma). 3. Mental health triggers. 4. Conflicting emotion and opinions. 5. Uninformed, could make participant feel inadequate. 6. Conflict of interest. 7. Data storage. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: 1. Participation will be voluntary, with clear information that they can withdraw at any time without providing a reason and without any impact to their work. 2. Participants can skip any questions or stop participation at any point. Support resources will be provided if recalling experiences cause distress. 3. Questions will be carefully designed to minimise distress and focus on professional experiences rather than personal trauma. Participants can pause, skip, or withdraw if needed, and support resources will be shared. 4. Participants will be ensured there is no right or wrong answers. The researcher will keep a respectful, non-judgemental environment. 5. Questions will value all experiences and make clear that contributions are about perspective, not performance. 6. Responses will be anonymised. Any researcher connections will be explained, and steps taken to avoid pressure or bias. 7. Data will be stored securely, with identifiers separate from responses. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription, and all information will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality, in line with UWTSD Data Management Policy and GDPR requirements. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if	

	something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: 1. Feeling overwhelmed or emotional fatigue. 2. Conflict of interest 3. Triggering from participants experiences 4. Time and workload pressure 5. Physical strain <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: 1. Researcher will use reflective supervision, take breaks when needed and discuss challenges or feelings with supervisor to manage stress. 2. Any possible conflicts will be disclosed to supervisors and managed appropriately to ensure professional boundaries and research honesty is maintained. 3. The researcher will discuss possible triggers with their supervisor, using reflective practice and seeking support if needed. 4. Researcher will create a realistic schedule and plan workloads to reduce stress. 5. The researcher will take manageable breaks from typing and screen time and adjusting workspaces to create comfort. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: 1. Risk to reputation of the University 2. Risk of data protection breaches	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: 1. Researcher will follow all ethical procedures, always get informed consent and act professionally throughout research. 2. Data will be anonymised, securely stored and handled according to UWTSD and legal guidelines to prevent any breaches.

	(this box should expand as you type)	(this box should expand as you type)
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: N/A (this box should expand as you type)

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☒	☐	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	0018557056609		

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? Participants will receive a summary of findings upon request. They can also access the full findings if they wish. This aligns with Youth Work principles of participation, empowerment, and inclusion (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019), ensuring practitioners' insights are valued and can inform practice. Feedback will be presented in clear, accessible language, and participants will be invited to provide reflections or comments, fostering a professional, participatory, and respectful approach consistent with ethical and research standards (BERA, 2024). (this box should expand as you type)
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. Participants will receive an information sheet and consent form explaining the research purpose, what participation involves, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. They will have the opportunity to ask questions before providing written consent, ensuring they fully understand their role and responsibilities. Consent will be securely recorded and stored in line with UWTSD data protection policies.

	This process follows BERA (2024) guidance on informed consent, voluntary participation, and clear communication, ensuring ethical standards are upheld and practitioners' autonomy is respected. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All participants names will be removed and replaced with pseudonyms throughout any reports or outputs. Data will be stored securely and used only for this research. This follows BERA (2024) guidance on keeping information private and safe, making sure participants details are protected and handled responsibly. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	X
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	X
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☒	☐
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Locked filing cabinet, password protected personal laptop, permanently destroy the raw data after completion of the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Only the researcher and the project supervisor will have access to the raw data. -Principle researcher (Llinos Davies)		

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The researcher will act as the custodian.		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data will be stored on a password-protected laptop and backed up on a secure UWTSD OneDrive account. Paper consent forms will be stored in a locked drawer. Data will be permanently deleted/shredded and not archived.		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/	
1	Signature of applicant:	LDavies
		Date: 9/12/2025

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date: 10/12/2025
5	Signature:	AEnoch	

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.