



Children will always be drawn to apps designed for adults

Tech giants have a duty to children

Sadly, we should not be surprised that children are using dating apps and that some are being manipulated and groomed by adults ("Revealed: the child victims of dating apps", News, last week). We know children often use apps that were not designed for them, and that many platforms have been unwilling to accept any responsibility for their underage users.

Only a statutory duty of care will ensure that social media companies take more responsibility for what is happening on their platforms. The era of letting the internet giants write their own rules is coming to an end.

I hope the government and the companies themselves will seize the moment and back measures that would make them do more to protect children from harm. Those who wish to exploit children are always quick to spot opportunities to do so. It is our duty to be equally speedy in preventing them.
Anne Longfield, children's commissioner for England

Watchdog is only answer

Last week Instagram took an important first step towards addressing the harmful and inappropriate content on its site. Its pledge to remove all graphic self-harm images is encouraging. It shows that platforms can tackle harmful content and behaviour on their sites if they feel compelled to do so.

Self-harm, suicide, bullying and sexual content should have no place on such sites, yet Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and Pinterest have repeatedly failed to enforce their own rules.

We need an independent regulator that can enforce a duty of care on platforms and ensure they take action to protect children. This is the only solution that can tackle the full extent of harms in an online environment where abusers jump from platform to platform and children are left to deal with the consequences.

The platforms themselves now have an opportunity to show they are on the side of children, and to begin the process willingly. Rather than wait for the forthcoming legislation to force their hand, they should begin redesigning their sites so they are fundamentally safe for children.

Molly Russell's death has propelled a groundswell of concern about what unregulated social media are doing to our young people. The social media giants have a duty to respond.

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