



I want to be famous!

Internet fame is not a new concept. We are now seeing our third or second generation of young people finding 'fame' online. Fame online looks different now than it did over a decade ago, nowadays, it's serious business! The goal might still be to have increased followers, but the number of followers and engagement can now directly correlate with how much money you can make.

Anyone and everyone can choose to make their account a 'business' one. Young people are collaborating with brands, creating content and promoting products, and it can be quite a lot to handle when you're at such a young age.

Social media fame can bring many positive qualities but it can also potentially lead to young people involving themselves in harmful behaviour in order to keep up with expectations and 'likes'. In this aspect, it can show the negative culture around fame online and what people will do to make money even when a bad spotlight is placed on them.

A New Platform Where Every Word Counts

There's people that go viral for good or bad reasons. We might see someone suddenly promoting a product who then goes on to have a line of merchandise with their face or catchphrase on, trying to make the most of their short lived fame. There are those with a talent who have built a name or business on the grounds of something more solid. These people don't just do ad's, they are brand ambassadors, have tight contracts and have to deliver enough content to keep up with their quotas. Another category of the 'Insta famous' are the activists, campaigning for human rights and many other political issues. All of these carry a weight and pressure which for younger people could have a seriously negative impact on their health and wellbeing.

A conundrum that has been going on for decades, is how teens and 20 somethings are expected to say just the right thing in response to a complex issue they are probably only just learning about. If young people don't say the right thing, they may expect abuse, a loss of followers and therefore a loss of earnings. If they say nothing, then it is common to be branded with shame. Having this exposure can lead to other causes for concern such as anxiety and self-hatred.

Why TikTok is so influential for children

TikTok is one of the most popular platforms for young people, built around short, engaging videos and fast-moving trends. Content can spread quickly, and users can gain large numbers of followers in a short time.

For many children, TikTok offers:

- Creative expression (dance, humour, storytelling, challenges)
- A sense of belonging and identity
- The possibility of recognition, popularity, or becoming "viral"



Children may feel pressure to gain likes, views and followers and to join in with trending challenges. This in turn can lead to comparing themselves to others., and taking risks to increase engagement.

Risks linked to TikTok trends

Risk-taking for views

Some trends encourage:

- Dangerous stunts or challenges
- Inappropriate or age-inappropriate behaviour
- Filming in unsafe locations

Oversharing and privacy risks

- Posting personal details (location, school, routines)
- Filming inside the home
- Sharing content that may later cause embarrassment or harm

Contact from strangers

- Messages or comments from unknown people
- Requests to collaborate or connect
- Potential grooming or exploitation

Emotional impact

- Anxiety about likes and views
- Upset from negative comments or trolling
- Pressure to keep up with trends

Responding to Social Media Fame Aspirations

With these inspirations, children run the risk of oversharing personal information, posting risky content for attention and being encouraged to act older than they are. They also attract contact from strangers and whilst we encourage our children to have accounts that remain private, we have to be aware that if determined enough they can create multiple accounts.

This in turn creates emotional wellbeing risks so that they are dependent on likes comments and followers. This increases their anxiety, low self esteem and lives them open to negative or abusive comments.

Children are often targeted with offers that seem too good to be true. Without being encouraged to be curious about what is in front of them they are often trusting and are met with requests for financial information, images or personal details.



How can we support young people that have ambitions to be 'Insta famous',

Avoid dismissing their ambitions it is important to stay curious and not critical. Talk about the realities of social media to help them understand that many influencers present a filtered or unrealistic lifestyle.

That within TikTok for example, many videos are staged, edited or unrealistic. Popularity does not equal success or happiness, and that not all trends are safe or appropriate.

It is important to encourage critical thinking and ask questions like “ why do you think this video is popular?” “ is this safe to copy?” and “ what do you think could go wrong?”

That not all online opportunities are genuine. It is important to reinforce that self worth is not based on likes or followers.

#Encourage safer ways to explore their interests. If your child enjoys creating content you can support them safely by encouraging creative expression, through art photography or music. Help them to develop skills offline.

When to take action

Treat concerns as a **safeguarding issue** if:

- A child is being pressured, threatened, or exploited
- There is inappropriate or sexual content involved
- They are being contacted by unknown adults