

SCHOOL INVITATION LETTER

Dear Headteacher,

Invitation to participate in the National Digital Determinants of Health Study.

I am writing to invite your school to participate in an important national study funded by the Wellcome Trust and led by Dr Amrit Kaur Purba at the [Digital Determinants of Health Hub](#), at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

Social media is one of the most pressing challenges facing schools today, yet evidence on which content online causally drives harm remains lacking. This study seeks to address this critical gap.

For a quick overview of the study, please [click here](#) to visit our study website, where you can watch our short study introductory video and find further study information (password: schoolddh1!).

What is the study about?

This three-stage study combines surveys with a voluntary TikTok data donation activity, where young people can share their TikTok viewing history (e.g., list of video links) with our research team. We use these links to classify content seen (e.g., alcohol or drug-related content). The videos are publicly available on TikTok and are not stored by our team. The findings will directly inform implementation and development of the Online Safety Act 2023 and wider UK government policy on protecting young people online. The study has been developed with key organisations including the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Ofcom and co-designed with our Youth Advisory Group, and Policy Advisory Group of experts in public health, digital safety, education, and young people's wellbeing.

Why are we inviting your school?

We are recruiting Year 10/S4 students (aged 14–15) from up to 10 UK secondary schools to ensure diverse socioeconomic and geographic representation, including groups often underrepresented in research.

What would participation involve?

Your school's role is limited to communication and facilitation. Specifically, we would ask your school to:

- Distribute parent/guardian information sheets and opt-out forms and manage the opt-out process locally – all materials are provided by the research team.
- Show a short study introduction video to the whole year group during tutor time or assembly and then share the study registration link individually via school communication systems to eligible students whose parents have not opted out.
- Circulate survey invitations and reminders to registered participants at each study stage.
- Where possible, facilitate optional in-school completion opportunities (approximately 20-30 minutes per stage: Stage 1 survey - January–February 2027; Stage 2 survey and optional data donation activity: March 2027; Stage 3 survey - January–February 2028).

The total staff time required across the full study is approximately 3 hours. No personal data are shared by the school with the research team. Students register directly with the research team via a secure platform, and all data are handled exclusively by the research team in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

What support will your school receive?

We will provide all materials needed to support delivery, including template emails, parent/guardian information sheets, opt-out forms, and a teacher briefing pack. We will also host a short online staff

briefing webinar before the study begins, with a recording available. In recognition of your school's contribution, your school will receive:

- £750 institutional participation payment, conditional on at least 75% of eligible Year 10/S4 completing Stage 1, in recognition of staff time and coordination support, plus an additional £5 per student who completes all 3 stages.
- An optional CPD webinar for teaching/pastoral staff on digital environments and youth health.
- A tailored school feedback report with aggregated school-specific findings, designed to help your school understand the digital environments your students are navigating and to support the development of targeted wellbeing interventions relevant to your school.

Participants receive modest voucher payments at each study stage in recognition of their time (up to £26 across all three stages), plus a certificate of participation on completion, valuable for university and college applications. We will also offer a dedicated online information session for parents/guardians during the opt-out period. The research team leads this session; your role is simply to let parents know it is available when you distribute the information pack and to help us find a suitable time. A written summary of everything covered will be shared with you afterwards, so you have a permanent record of what parents were told.

What about safeguarding?

All research team members hold DBS clearance and safeguarding training. Signposting to Childline, Young Minds, and Samaritans is displayed to students within the surveys, and a safeguarding escalation procedure is in place (available on request). All data collected are confidential and will not be shared with parents, teachers, or schools. In rare cases, where data donation content indicates a serious risk of harm to the student or another person, the research team act in line with safeguarding obligations, including escalation to the LSHTM Designated Safeguarding Lead. This threshold is high and there is a strong presumption in favour of confidentiality.

What are the next steps?

If your school confirms participation, you will receive access to all study materials and a clear timeline of what we will ask you to do and when, ahead of formal onboarding in September 2026. If you are interested in your school participating or would like more information, please contact the research team using the details below. If your school agrees to participate, we will ask you to confirm your school's involvement in writing. Thank you very much for considering this invitation. We hope that your school will be able to contribute to this important research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Amrit Kaur Purba

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Study Information

This study is funded by the Wellcome Trust (Grant Reference 324905/Z/25/Z) and has received ethical approval from the LSHTM Ethics Committee (Ethics Reference: 32995). The study is sponsored by LSHTM.

Project Partners

