

Greater focus needed on supporting the “switched on” generation

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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Speaking at a major social media conference today, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson called for a greater focus on supporting the “switched on” generation.

She pointed to recent figures which show a marked increase in incidence of depression among young people, especially teenage girls.

Researchers have pinned much of the rise on the hostility of the new social media environment being faced by young people.

Today’s conference was organised by Twitter and Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman Miles Briggs, who is campaigning for the NHS to give more support for mental health issues.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Social media is a great communications tool which has brought us closer together. But we must also face up to the negative side it has brought too.

“The switched on world is piling huge pressures on young women, and men, to live up to unreachable expectations.

“Young people are being made to feel constantly judged, often harshly. We know that the rise of online bullying has become a major factor in the decline in mental health among young people.

“We need to see government providing people with the education they need on how to tackle this new world and stay psychologically healthy at the same time.

“That includes far greater access to mental health professional in GPs and hospitals. It also means providing more counselling in secondary schools, so that mental health problems can be picked up early.

“The platforms have a duty of care to their members. They must recognise that free speech for some can carry a cost to others.

“Transparent rules for engagement and clear penalties – including having accounts suspended – must be outlined so everyone knows where they stand.

“And sites could provide free notifications or sponsored posts for those organisations and charities offering support – be it the Samaritans, SamH or Breathing Space.

“Reminding people that there is help available can absolutely be part of a forum’s corporate social responsibility.

“Most of all though, we need to take responsibility for our own actions. We have to own what we tweet.

“Debate and disagreement can be good, but it should never cross the line.”