

NOMO app and teenage social media use: a randomised controlled trial in England and Wales

Submission date 31/10/2025	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 18/11/2025	Overall study status Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 10/11/2025	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study is looking at whether a smartphone app called NOMO can help teenagers in UK schools use social media less. Research suggests that too much social media can affect young people's learning, happiness, and sleep. The app encourages pupils to spend less time on their phones by using peer support, shared challenges, and rewards. The study will test how well the app works by comparing schools that use it with schools that don't.

Who can participate?

Pupils in Years 9 and 10 at participating UK secondary schools can take part. Teachers and parents may also be invited to share their views.

What does the study involve?

Pupils in schools chosen to use the app will be invited to download NOMO and take part in its challenges from November 2025 to March 2026. All pupils will be asked to complete short anonymous surveys before and after the trial, looking at things like how much time they spend on social media, how distracted they feel, how satisfied they are with life, and how well they sleep. Some pupils, teachers, and parents may also be invited to take part in voluntary interviews or extra surveys to share their experiences.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Using the app may help pupils reduce screen time, feel more focused, sleep better, and feel happier. There are no known risks, but pupils can choose not to take part in any part of the study if they don't want to. All responses will be kept anonymous.

Where is the study run from?

Behavioural Insights Team (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study starts in November 2025 and will run until March 2026.

Who is funding the study?
National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (UK)

Who is the main contact?
niall.daly@bi.team

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Mr Niall Daly

ORCID ID
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8378-4261>

Contact details
Behavioural Insights Team, Victoria Embankment
London
United Kingdom
EC4Y 0DS
+44 (0) 207 438 2500
niall.daly@bi.team

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Mr Lal Chadeesingh

Contact details
Behavioural Insights Team, Victoria Embankment
London
United Kingdom
EC4Y 0DS
+44 (0) 207 438 2500
lal.chadeesingh@bi.team

Type(s)
Public

Contact name
Mr Callum O'Mahony

Contact details
Behavioural Insights Team, Victoria Embankment
London
United Kingdom
EC4Y 0DS

+44 (0) 207 438 2500
callum.omahony@bi.team

Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

TP2023025

Study information

Scientific Title

Changes in social media usage among teenage smartphone users in the UK: a randomised controlled trial of the NOMO app

Acronym

NOMOSM

Study objectives

The primary objective of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of NOMO in reducing social media use in UK schools. This evaluation seeks to generate evidence to inform potential scale-up of the NOMO app, and aims to answer three research questions. The primary research question is: "How effective is the NOMO smartphone app in reducing social media usage of Year 9 and 10 pupils?". The study also seeks to address one secondary research question: "How effective is introducing the NOMO smartphone app in schools, and encouraging pupils to use it, in reducing distraction for Year 9 and 10 pupils?". The study also seeks to address two exploratory research questions: "How effective is the NOMO smartphone app in improving life satisfaction for Year 9 and 10 pupils?"; and "How effective is the NOMO smartphone app in improving the quality of sleep of Year 9 and 10 pupils?"

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 13/10/2025, Behavioural Insights Team internal ethics review (58 Victoria Embankment, London, EC4Y 0DS, United Kingdom; +44 (0) 207 438 2500; info@bi.team), ref: TP2025023

Study design

Interventional randomized controlled trial and implementation and process evaluation (IPE) using mixed methods

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Social media usage, distraction, life satisfaction, sleep

Interventions

Control (comparison arm): The comparison group is a waitlist control arm. Pupils in schools assigned to this arm are expected to continue with their business-as-usual social media practices during the trial period. They will not be invited to use the NOMO app by the research team or their school during the intervention period (November 2025 to February 2026). They receive the intervention (invitation to use the app) only after the trial period ends, starting in March 2026. The total duration of the active intervention for the control group during the study period is zero months, with a three-month follow-up (endline survey in February 2026)

Treatment arm: The treatment arm is invited to download and use the NOMO smartphone application. The intervention involves school staff introducing and encouraging all eligible and consenting pupils to download and use the app. The NOMO app uses collective action principles (peer support, shared challenges, positive reinforcement) to help users reduce the time they spend on social media, for example, by earning points redeemable for rewards. The total duration of the active intervention is approximately three months, running from November 2025 to February 2026. Follow-up occurs immediately after the intervention ends, with the endline survey administered in early-mid February 2026.

Randomisation process: This study employs a two-arm waitlist design RCT where randomization occurs at the school level (cluster randomisation). All participating pupils within a school are placed in the same trial arm. Once all schools are recruited and have completed their baseline surveys, they will be randomised by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) into one of the two trial arms (Treatment or Control). Schools will be randomly allocated to arms using a cluster-level randomisation procedure performed in Stata 16.0 software, with the process secured by a reproducible seed for complete transparency.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Social media usage measured using a self-report 9-point scale questionnaire item at baseline (November 2025) and endline (February 2026). The specific item wording is: "Thinking about your last full school day, how much time in total do you think you spent using social media apps (like TikTok, Instagram, etc.) over the entire 24-hour day?"

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Distraction is measured using a self-report 7-point Likert scale questionnaire item, adapted from the Online Homework Distraction Scale (ODHS) at baseline (November 2025) and endline (February 2026). The specific item wording is: "I stop my homework to check my social media (e. g., Instagram, TikTok)".

Exploratory outcome #1: Life Satisfaction is measured using a self-report 7-point Likert scale questionnaire item from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) at baseline (November 2025) and endline (February 2026). The specific item wording is: "I am satisfied with my life".o

Exploratory outcome #2: Sleep quality is measured using a self-report 11-point scale

questionnaire item from the Single-Item Sleep Quality Scale (SQS) at baseline (November 2025) and endline (February 2026). The specific item wording is: "Thinking about the past 7 days, how would you rate the quality of your sleep overall?". The scale ranges from "Terrible" (0) to "Excellent" (10).

Completion date

28/02/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Being a Year 9 or Year 10 pupil in a participating UK secondary school

Participant type(s)

Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

12 years

Upper age limit

16 years

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

Withdrawal from the evaluation by a parent or guardian

Date of first enrolment

03/11/2025

Date of final enrolment

14/11/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Wales

Study participating centre

Chessington School

Chessington School

Garrison Lane

Surrey

United Kingdom

KT9 2JS

Study participating centre

Seven Kings School

Ley Street

Ilford

United Kingdom

IG2 7BT

Study participating centre

The Academy, Selsey

School Lane

Selsey

Chichester

United Kingdom

PO20 9EH

Study participating centre

Laurel Park School

56 Wilmer Way

London

United Kingdom

N14 7HY

Study participating centre

Ribston Hall High School

Stroud Road

Gloucester

United Kingdom

GL1 5LE

Study participating centre

Barking Abbey School, a Specialist Sports and Humanities College

Sandringham Road

Barking
United Kingdom
IG11 9AG

Study participating centre

Reach Academy Feltham

Fern House
53-55 High Street
Feltham
United Kingdom
TW13 4AB

Study participating centre

Towers School and Sixth Form Centre

Faversham Road
Kennington
Ashford
United Kingdom
TN24 9AL

Study participating centre

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community

Lime Avenue
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6GL
Blaenau Gwent
United Kingdom
NP23 6GL

Study participating centre

Chetwynde School

Rating Lane
Barrow-in-furness
United Kingdom
LA13 0NY

Study participating centre

Brookvale Groby Learning Campus

Ratby Road
Groby

Leicester
United Kingdom
LE6 0FP

Study participating centre

Marriotts School

Brittain Way
Stevenage
United Kingdom
SG2 8UT

Study participating centre

Cramlington Learning Village

Highburn
Cramlington
United Kingdom
NE23 6BN

Study participating centre

Bridgemary School

Wych Lane
Gosport
United Kingdom
PO13 0JN

Study participating centre

Willows High

Willows Ave
Cardiff
South Glamorgan
CF24 2YE
Cardiff
United Kingdom
CF24 2YE

Study participating centre

Baysgarth School

Barrow Road
Barton-upon-humber
United Kingdom
DN18 6AE

Study participating centre

Trinity Academy Halifax

Shay Lane
Halifax
United Kingdom
HX2 9TZ

Study participating centre

Werneth School

Harrytown
Romiley
Stockport
United Kingdom
SK6 3BX

Study participating centre

Buxton School

234 Cann Hall Road
Leytonstone
E11 3NN
Leytonstone
United Kingdom
E11 3NN

Study participating centre

The Friary School

Eastern Avenue
Lichfield
United Kingdom
WS13 7EW

Study participating centre

The Academy of St Nicholas

Gardners Drive
Liverpool
L6 7UR
Liverpool
United Kingdom
L6 7UR

Study participating centre

Chancellor's School

Pine Grove
Brookmans Park
Hatfield
United Kingdom
AL9 7BN

Study participating centre

Cowbridge Comprehensive School

Aberthin Road Cowbridge
Vale of Glamorgan
United Kingdom
CF71 7EN

Study participating centre

Clacton County High School

51 Walton Road
Clacton-on-sea
United Kingdom
CO15 6DZ

Study participating centre

Havelock Academy

Holyoake Road
Grimsby
United Kingdom
DN32 8JH

Study participating centre

Alsager School

Hassall Road
Alsager
Stoke-on-trent
United Kingdom
ST7 2HR

Study participating centre

Langdon Park Community School

Bright Street
Poplar
London
United Kingdom
E14 0RZ

Study participating centre

Applemore College

Roman Road
Dibden Purlieu
Southampton
United Kingdom
SO45 4RQ

Study participating centre

St Peter's Catholic School

Horseshoe Lane East, Guildford
Surrey
United Kingdom
GU1 2TN

Study participating centre

Lampton Academy

Lampton Avenue
Hounslow
United Kingdom
TW3 4EP

Study participating centre

The Cornerstone Academy

Blandford Close
Poole
United Kingdom
BH15 4BQ

Study participating centre

Coundon Court

Northbrook Road

Coventry
United Kingdom
CV6 2AJ

Study participating centre

Court Fields School

Mantle Street
Wellington
United Kingdom
TA21 8SW

Study participating centre

Albany Academy

Bolton Road
Chorley
United Kingdom
PR7 3AY

Study participating centre

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

Hampton Dene Road
Hereford
United Kingdom
HR1 1UU

Study participating centre

Enfield County School for Girls

Holly Walk
Enfield
United Kingdom
EN2 6QG

Study participating centre

St John Bosco Arts College

Storrington Avenue
Liverpool
United Kingdom
L11 9DQ

Study participating centre

Lode Heath School

Lode Lane
Solihull
United Kingdom
B91 2HW

Study participating centre

St Hilda's Church of England High School

Croxteth Drive
Sefton Park
Liverpool
United Kingdom
L17 3AL

Study participating centre

Sir William Borlase's Grammar School

West Street
Marlow
United Kingdom
SL7 2BR

Study participating centre

Westfield School

Eckington Road
Sheffield
United Kingdom
S20 1HQ

Study participating centre

La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School

1-4 Atkins Road
London
United Kingdom
SW12 0AB

Study participating centre

Eaton Bank Academy

Jackson Road

Congleton
United Kingdom
CW12 1NT

Study participating centre

Thamesview School

Thong Lane
Gravesend
United Kingdom
DA12 4LF

Study participating centre

Harris Church of England Academy

Harris Drive
Rugby
United Kingdom
CV22 6EA

Study participating centre

South Chingford Foundation School

Stadium Close
Chingford
London
United Kingdom
E4 8ES

Study participating centre

St John the Baptist School

Elmbridge Lane
Woking
Surrey
United Kingdom
GU22 9AL

Study participating centre

Llisbury High School

Nash Road
Newport
United Kingdom
NP19 4RP

Study participating centre
Saracens High School
Corner Mead
London
United Kingdom
NW9 4AS

Study participating centre
Middleton Technology School
Kenyon Lane
Middleton
Manchester
United Kingdom
M24 2GT

Study participating centre
Waseley Hills High School
School Road
Rubery
Rednal
Birmingham
United Kingdom
B45 9EL

Sponsor information

Organisation
The Behavioural Insights Team

ROR
<https://ror.org/03mk5b468>

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name

National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts

Alternative Name(s)

National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, National Endowment for Science, Technology & the Arts, Nesta (charity), NESTA, NESTA

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are not expected to be made available due to GDPR.

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol file			10/11/2025	No	No