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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

Registration date
18/11/2025

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
27/02/2026

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] 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?
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Public

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Additional identifiers

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

Primary study design
Interventional

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

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

07/03/2026

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

Total final enrolment
0

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
England
KT9 2JS

Study participating centre
Seven Kings School
Ley Street
Ilford
England
IG2 7BT

Study participating centre
The Academy, Selsey
School Lane
Selsey
Chichester
England
PO20 9EH

Study participating centre
Laurel Park School
56 Wilmer Way
London
England
N14 7HY

Study participating centre
Ribston Hall High School
Stroud Road
Gloucester
England
GL1 5LE

Study participating centre
Barking Abbey School, a Specialist Sports and Humanities College
Sandringham Road

Barking
England
IG11 9AG

Study participating centre
Reach Academy Feltham
Fern House
53-55 High Street
Feltham
England
TW13 4AB

Study participating centre
Towers School and Sixth Form Centre
Faversham Road
Kennington
Ashford
England
TN24 9AL

Study participating centre
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community
Lime Avenue
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6GL
Blaenau Gwent
Wales
NP23 6GL

Study participating centre
Chetwynde School
Rating Lane
Barrow-in-furness
England
LA13 0NY

Study participating centre
Brookvale Groby Learning Campus
Ratby Road
Groby

Leicester
England
LE6 0FP

Study participating centre
Marriotts School
Brittain Way
Stevenage
England
SG2 8UT

Study participating centre
Cramlington Learning Village
Highburn
Cramlington
England
NE23 6BN

Study participating centre
Bridgemary School
Wych Lane
Gosport
England
PO13 0JN

Study participating centre
Willows High
Willows Ave
Cardiff
South Glamorgan
CF24 2YE
Cardiff
Wales
CF24 2YE

Study participating centre
Baysgarth School
Barrow Road
Barton-upon-humber
England
DN18 6AE

Study participating centre
Trinity Academy Halifax
Shay Lane
Halifax
England
HX2 9TZ

Study participating centre
Werneth School
Harrytown
Romiley
Stockport
England
SK6 3BX

Study participating centre
Buxton School
234 Cann Hall Road
Leytonstone
E11 3NN
Leytonstone
England
E11 3NN

Study participating centre
The Friary School
Eastern Avenue
Lichfield
England
WS13 7EW

Study participating centre
The Academy of St Nicholas
Gardners Drive
Liverpool
L6 7UR
Liverpool
England
L6 7UR

Study participating centre
Chancellor's School
Pine Grove
Brookmans Park
Hatfield
England
AL9 7BN

Study participating centre
Cowbridge Comprehensive School
Aberthin Road Cowbridge
Vale of Glamorgan
Wales
CF71 7EN

Study participating centre
Clacton County High School
51 Walton Road
Clacton-on-sea
England
CO15 6DZ

Study participating centre
Havelock Academy
Holyoake Road
Grimsby
England
DN32 8JH

Study participating centre
Alsager School
Hassall Road
Alsager
Stoke-on-trent
England
ST7 2HR

Study participating centre

Langdon Park Community School
Bright Street
Poplar
London
England
E14 0RZ

Study participating centre
Applemore College
Roman Road
Dibden Purlieu
Southampton
England
SO45 4RQ

Study participating centre
St Peter's Catholic School
Horseshoe Lane East, Guildford
Surrey
England
GU1 2TN

Study participating centre
Lampton Academy
Lampton Avenue
Hounslow
England
TW3 4EP

Study participating centre
The Cornerstone Academy
Blandford Close
Poole
England
BH15 4BQ

Study participating centre
Coundon Court
Northbrook Road

Coventry
England
CV6 2AJ

Study participating centre
Court Fields School
Mantle Street
Wellington
England
TA21 8SW

Study participating centre
Albany Academy
Bolton Road
Chorley
England
PR7 3AY

Study participating centre
The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School
Hampton Dene Road
Hereford
England
HR1 1UU

Study participating centre
Enfield County School for Girls
Holly Walk
Enfield
England
EN2 6QG

Study participating centre
St John Bosco Arts College
Storrington Avenue
Liverpool
England
L11 9DQ

Study participating centre
Lode Heath School
Lode Lane
Solihull
England
B91 2HW

Study participating centre
St Hilda's Church of England High School
Croxteth Drive
Sefton Park
Liverpool
England
L17 3AL

Study participating centre
Sir William Borlase's Grammar School
West Street
Marlow
England
SL7 2BR

Study participating centre
Westfield School
Eckington Road
Sheffield
England
S20 1HQ

Study participating centre
La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School
1-4 Atkins Road
London
England
SW12 0AB

Study participating centre
Eaton Bank Academy
Jackson Road

Congleton
England
CW12 1NT

Study participating centre
Thamesview School
Thong Lane
Gravesend
England
DA12 4LF

Study participating centre
Harris Church of England Academy
Harris Drive
Rugby
England
CV22 6EA

Study participating centre
South Chingford Foundation School
Stadium Close
Chingford
London
England
E4 8ES

Study participating centre
St John the Baptist School
Elmbridge Lane
Woking
Surrey
England
GU22 9AL

Study participating centre
Lliswerry High School
Nash Road
Newport
Wales
NP19 4RP

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

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

Study participating centre
Waseley Hills High School
School Road
Rubery
Rednal
Birmingham
England
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

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

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