

Mis/Disinformation

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that might be shared on social media, without the intention to mislead.

Disinformation is false information that is **deliberately** shared to deceive people. It's someone intentionally distorting the facts.

Mis/Disinformation present threats to health, and have been shown to trigger anxiety, depression, and panic attacks. New skills are required to manage these dangers and support children and young people (CYP) to have a positive online experience.

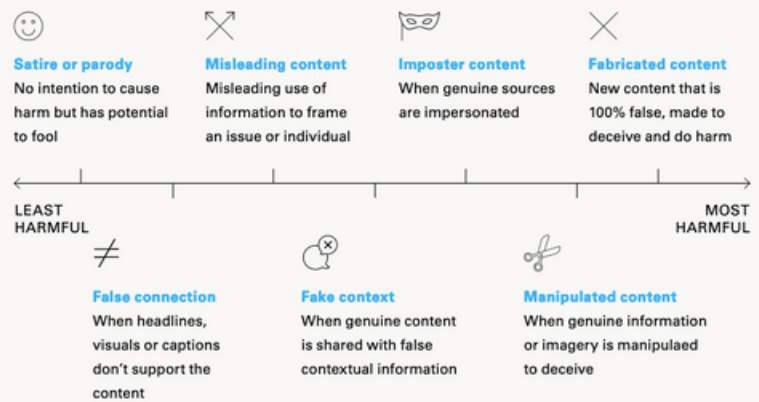


Seven types of Mis/Disinformation

Mis/Disinformation can appear as images, text, video, audio, or a combination of all of these. It has been categorised by UNICEF into seven types which vary from the most to the least harmful.

[Read the report](#)

FIGURE 1: SEVEN TYPES OF MIS/DISINFORMATION



Source: Claire Wardle, 'Fake news. It's complicated', First Draft, 2017

The numbers

- Social media is the main source of news for **71%** of young people (16-24 years old) ([Ofcom, 2023](#)).
- Worryingly, a third of children (**32%**) said they believed all or most of what they saw on social media to be accurate and true ([Ofcom, 2023](#)).
- This is an issue because adults and children overestimate their ability to spot misinformation - **one in three** fail to question misinformation when they encounter it online ([Ofcom, 2022](#)).



Why it's harmful

- CYP need access to reliable information to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
- Mental health misinformation can encourage poorly informed self-diagnosis and prevent CYP from accessing evidence-based support.
- Some Mis/Disinformation can be harmful, including scams, encouraging people to avoid official guidance, take harmful medication, or providing damaging nutritional or weight loss advice.
- Generative AI is making it harder to spot Mis/Disinformation. There's a rise in altered images, videos, and 'deep fakes', with AI being used to create indecent images, including of children ([UKSIC, 2023](#)).

What you can do

- Show CYP fact-checking tools to check if something is true, including [BBC Verify](#), [Snopes](#), or [Google Lens for images](#).
- Talk about Mis/Disinformation. Use resources like the [Bad News Game](#) to expose CYP to strategies used to mislead them: polarization, invoking emotions, spreading conspiracy theories, and trolling.
- Improve CYP's media literacy, using resources like those listed below. Equip them with critical thinking skills and the ability to question what they see online.
- Be aware of and advise on trusted websites and supports, such as [NHS Inform](#), [Young Minds](#), or [Childline](#).



Resources

- [Fake News and Misinformation](#) - A hub providing facts and advice on fake news and misinformation from Internet Matters.
- [The Other Side of the Story](#) - A resource from BBC Bitesize that looks at fake news and how to spot it.
- [Interland](#) - An interactive game to support learning about digital safety and citizenship from Google.
- [Introduction to Thinking Critically Online](#) - An educational resource from Internet Matters.