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RSE, ARTS & CULTURE

11th August 2020

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# WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE A FORCE FOR GOOD

Brook's Media and Communications Officer, Eliza Bell, writes about why young people on social media are a powerful driver for inspiration and change.

Young people and social media are two things that don't always get the best write-ups. Both are (at times) accused of being vain, disinterested in the bigger picture, and of wanting to have things quick and easy. But having managed Brook's social media channels for over a year now, I've found the opposite to be true.

When I started at Brook I was tasked with creating an online community for young people, both where they could learn about sexual health and wellbeing, and where they could also share their own experiences. At the time that I joined, Brook had just created their Instagram account and had around 300 followers. A year later, we're at over 5200 and counting. Each month we cover a different theme relating to young people's sexual health and wellbeing – from masturbation to STIs – and as our community grows our content is increasingly driven by what young people tell us they want to know about.

Brook believes in a society where young people are free to be themselves. That's why we give young people the opportunity to share their experiences – called 'real stories' – which are posted on our [website](#) and [our Instagram](#). These stories aim to create a shared experience and show other young people that they are not alone in what they are going through.

During my year at Brook, our followers have shared stories on a range of topics affecting young people, including [relationships](#), [endometriosis](#), [masturbation](#) and [body dysmorphia](#).

“I AM NOT ONLY IMMENSELY PROUD THAT BROOK PROVIDES A PLATFORM TO AMPLIFY THESE POWERFUL VOICES, BUT WHOLLY IN AWE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SO ELOQUENTLY USE THAT PLATFORM. IT FILLS ME WITH HOPE.

Their voices are testament to the host of challenges facing young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as well the resilience of those who face them. I am consistently inspired by the people I interact with, who are fighting to tear down socials norms and prejudices on a daily basis. In providing a safe space that empowers young people to use their voice, I am in turn empowered by their openness and determination to make a change

Our highly engaged online community of young people disprove the myth that the youth of today are either vapid or lazy on a daily basis. They are constantly self-educating, challenging themselves and growing.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CDRDXD5pyeG/>

“THIS IS DEMONSTRATIVE NOT ONLY OF THE PASSIONATE AND ACTIVIST NATURE OF THE NEW GENERATION, BUT ALSO OF THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE.

On the surface, looking at the heavily edited lifestyles of influencers and celebrities, it's plain to see why social media has been [linked to issues around mental health and self-worth](#), particularly for the generation that is growing up immersed in it.

When used in the right way, however, I believe it has a much greater potential for creating unity. It can be a safe haven and an opportunity for connection for those who struggle to find comfort in their physical communities. Social media can provide a lifeline for young people who feel lonely or are not sure where to turn. This has been particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many young people isolated from friends and partners.

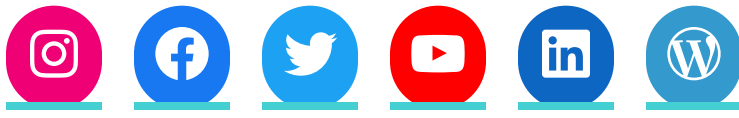
We hope that in creating a community where all young people are able to see a reflection of themselves, we can be a source of comfort and inspiration for those who may be struggling. In doing so, we are able to change attitudes, challenge prejudices and champion equality.

Young people who follow us tell us that our account is a source of accessible information and empowering content.

“POSTS LIKE THESE CAN BEGIN TO MAKE US FEEL SO MUCH MORE AT EASE WITH OUR SEXUALITY AND MAKE IT OK FOR US TO LEARN ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR BODIES. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THIS!”

“THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK AND CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR US ALL.”

We aim to make our posts inclusive and authentic, with a focus on user-driven and generated content that champions young people. We strive to pass the mic and give young people the space to be their own advocates, rather than speaking on their behalf. From my experience, young people have taken social media and channelled it to amplify their voices on the issues that matter to them; it's a privilege to be part of that.



[https://www.instagram.com/brook\\_sexpositive/](https://www.instagram.com/brook_sexpositive/)

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