

Influencers

The affect of people influencing youngsters is not new, after all it is probably what BP was doing back in 1908; however, with the advent of the internet it can become easier for people to be adversely affected. This hopefully does not apply to Squirrels, Beavers or Cubs, but may be an issue with some Scouts and Explorers.

Scout Leaders are in a privileged position in being able to engage youngsters in positive discussions and perhaps influence their views and ensure concerns are passed on through having discussions with parents or contacting Safeguarding.

We are not likely to have any impact by using the age old "Don't do it" technique - saying 'don't go on Tik Tok, Youtube, Telegram messages etc' is not likely to be effective and in fact is over the top. The views that some Scouts may get from these platforms may well need to be challenged and we do need to highlight that just because it's 'on the internet', does not mean it's true or appropriate.

Influencers can have a positive effect on their followers, but equally, there can be negative effects tooWhat is an ideal body image? Am I too fat? Do I need more muscles - do I look like a weakling? Should I try doing ?????? to my girlfriend? The extreme is the posts of people like Andrew Tate, who despite the accusations against him, still appears to have many followers.

So ... what can we do? Listen to our young people, and challenge some of the opinions that they will hear not only from people like Andrew Tate, but also from people who come across as positive. We need to highlight to all of our leaders that safeguarding their young people is likely to involve some understanding of the current issues for youngsters and this may entail making leaders aware of what the current issues for children/young people are.

Thankfully most children/young people will not be influenced to do something awful when trying to copy an "Alpha Male", but if we have a better understanding of the pressures on them it will be helpful.

Andrew Tate is now in prison awaiting trial, but his ideas are still circulating on the internet; if he is imprisoned, there will be others who are ready to take his place. One person's disenchantment is another person's inspiration - his hate filled videos have been viewed more than 11bn times!

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