

NHS boss: Web giants must fund mental health

By **Ben Spencer**
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SOCIAL media giants should be forced to fund treatment for the soaring numbers of children with mental health problems, the head of the NHS said yesterday.

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, called for tech firms to pay a 'mental health levy' to 'help pick up the pieces' of the damage done by overuse.

Mental health problems among the young have increased six-fold in the past two decades, with 10 per cent of children now suffering from a diagnosable psychological condition.

Addressing a global mental health summit in London, Mr Stevens said: 'I think we've now got enough evidence and research into the impact of social media on mental health.

'Although it's not fully developed, there's widespread acceptance that overuse of these platforms can have a detrimental effect on children and young people.'

He said messaging service WhatsApp had already raised its minimum age from 13 to 16, adding: 'We now need to consider what else social media platforms need to do to help stem the tide of mental ill health in this country.'

The gambling industry is funding addiction awareness and lenders are paying for the Money Advice Service, Mr Stevens said. He added there was a need to discuss whether a mental health levy would be a 'proportionate response' to links between health and technology.

Social media firms are obvious targets as a source of revenue because they make so much money, yet often pay very little tax. This week it emerged Facebook had revenues of £1.3 billion last year, but paid just £7.4 million in corporation tax in the UK.

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