



Escapism isn't the answer: new report uncovers harmful practices in the world of reality shifting

For immediate release

A new report from [**VoiceBox**](#), the international social enterprise run by young people, has found themes of mental health, suicide, and harmful escapism within reality shifting – a modern take on a meditation-esque practice where young people believe they can ‘shift’ their consciousness into other realities.

Not to be confused with daydreaming, ‘shifters’ believe they can truly access alternative worlds by dissociating to a ‘desired reality’ of their choice such as Harry Potter’s Hogwarts.

This phenomenon has been heightened by social media – adopted by young people to withdraw from real life in order to cope with anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses.

‘Reality Shifting: Escapism Gone Too Far?’ shows instances of young people ‘manifesting’ their body towards a clinical death (such as a heart attack) to exist in their desired world ‘forever’. They may skip school, ignore responsibility and struggle with their identity. Reality shifting communities encourage this destructive behaviour, and young people end up isolated, vulnerable and disconnected from their emotions.

Disparity in mental health support

Little has been done to tackle the problem of the ever-growing mental health crisis among young people – despite the increase in both media and state attention.

Lack of primary mental health care is leaving many at crisis point. With nowhere to turn, young people face a new wave of potential harm as they look inwards to the online world for support.



What needs to happen

More work needs to be done to understand why this decline in mental health is happening. It will require a cross-sector collaboration between governing bodies, tech firms, and youth organisations.

We urge for better acknowledgement of early-intervention services such as youth clubs and counselling, and the positive impact they have on communities. This needs to be on an international level to ensure no young person is left behind.

Natalie Foos, Director of VoiceBox, said: “This report has magnified the seriousness of solely relying on social media for mental health support.

“While we welcome online spaces that nurture mental health and provide healthy outlets, we are concerned that some trends are taken too far.”

You can read the full report [here](#). For more information or an interview, please contact info@voicebox.site.

Editor's note

Research was carried out through VoiceBox’s network of international ambassadors and online research through TikTok and opinion-gathering platforms such as Reddit, and Twitter. We also conducted a literature review that was inevitably limited given the newness of the issue. We are grateful for those who took part in this research.

About VoiceBox

VoiceBox is an international social enterprise and content platform created by young people, for young people, working to challenge organisations big and small to make better products, services and policies.