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# Cheese



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# The 10 perfect cheese recipes

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# The Guardian

News provider of the year

## Social media accused of 'monetising misery'

Inquest rules harmful content contributed to Molly Russell's death in 'big tobacco moment'

Dan Milmo  
Global technology editor

Molly Russell's father accused the world's biggest social media firms of "monetising misery" after an inquest ruled harmful online content had contributed to the teenager's death.

Ian Russell accused Meta - the owner of Facebook and Instagram - of guiding Molly, 14, on a "demented trail of life-sucking content" after the landmark ruling raised the regulatory pressure on social media companies.

The inquest heard yesterday that Molly, from Harrow in north-west London, had viewed large amounts of content related to suicide, depression, self-harm and anxiety on Instagram and Pinterest before she died in November 2017.

Russell, 59, urged Meta's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, to "listen to the people who use his platform, listen to the conclusions the coroner gave and then do something about it". He also called for the government to implement its long-delayed online safety bill.

Executives from Pinterest and Meta, who gave evidence before the senior coroner Andrew Walker during the two-week hearing, have both



▲ Molly Russell, 14, from Harrow, died in 2017 after viewing large amounts of content related to suicide, depression and self-harm PHOTOGRAPH: RUSSELL FAMILY

apologised for what their platforms showed Molly.

The teenager "died from an act of self-harm whilst suffering from depression and the negative effects of online content", Walker ruled yesterday. He said the algorithms that curated a social media user's experience had pushed harmful content to Molly that she had not requested. Some content had "romanticised" acts of self-harm and sought to discourage users from seeking help.

Concluding it would not be safe to rule the cause of Molly's death as suicide, Walker said some of the sites viewed by her were "not safe" because they allowed access to adult content that should not have been available to a 14-year-old.

"It is likely that the above material viewed by Molly, already suffering with a depressive illness and vulnerable due to her age, affected her in a negative way and contributed to her death in a more than minimal way," he added, delivering his findings of fact at North London coroner's court.

Speaking after the two-week hearing came to a close, Molly's father said: "It's time to protect our innocent young people, instead of allowing platforms to prioritise their profits by monetising their misery."

He also criticised evidence given by Meta, the owner of Instagram and Facebook, at the two-week hearing. Elizabeth Lagone, the head of health and wellbeing policy at Meta, had described one batch of depression, suicide and

Marina  
Hyde  
*'I look back  
at 2016 and  
think oh  
get over  
yourself luv'*

→ Saturday



Great  
walks of  
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