The Suffolk Cybersurvey 2017
A picture of digital lives as told by young people

Youthworks
Adrienne Katz and Aiman El Asam
Welcome to the seventh annual Cybersurvey report, commissioned by the Online Safety Strategic Group (e-Safer Suffolk), and carried out in conjunction with Youthworks Consulting Ltd.

The importance of this research – as indicated by the over 1,900 responses from children and young people, underlines the strength of the partnership approach that we have maintained in Suffolk, enabling us to collaboratively address the online safety concerns of children, young people and those who work with, or care for them.

We’ve all seen the headlines, the ‘media panic’ about the impact of social media on society. Whilst we absolutely recognise that for key groups of our children and young people, there is a significant risk of encountering harmful content, or being drawn into exploitative situations. Our response to meeting their needs will be informed by the results of this research, and will continue to be effective through our well-established multi-agency safeguarding pathway.

As adults we have a responsibility to really listen to what children and young people are saying. How access to the world and relationships through the internet and social media is integral to their attainment and to how they see themselves - their positive wellbeing. We thank them for their honesty and openness.

I also want to acknowledge our partners in education and across the voluntary and community sector, who encourage and support children and young people to take part and share their experiences.

Our partnership approach is leading to results, and it’s particularly pleasing to see this year how parents and carers responding to the challenges. However, we must not shift our focus or efforts to safeguard, support and empower all our children and young people.

Councillor Gordon Jones  
Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education & Skills  
Chair of Online Safety Strategic Group (e-Safer Suffolk)  

The cybersurvey is supported by the Strategic Online Safety Group led by Suffolk County Council, the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Adult Safeguarding Board, Suffolk Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
We wish to thank all the young people who took the time to respond and those who helped to make this survey possible. In particular we thank Marisa Batson of Suffolk County Council.
The Cybersurvey, developed in 2008 is now in its tenth year. It is a remarkable time series of data reflecting the experiences of young people online and using their mobile phones. Key issues have come to the fore at different times. The survey initially focused on all types of cyberbullying as it was a new phenomenon causing concern at a time when the extent of it was not yet known. Each year the survey is updated to reflect current risks and harms and to look at aspects raised by young people. The Cybersurvey is developed and directed by Adrienne Katz of Youthworks.

Various local authorities have contributed to the development of the survey since its inception in the West Midlands. Suffolk has played a major part, over six consecutive years. Questions have been developed through consultation with children’s services, police, charities, schools and young people. For the last three years we have had guidance and support from Dr Aiman El Asam of the University of Kingston. As new questions are included, they are tested by young people for relevance, clarity and language. Any local authority, group of schools, academy chain or cluster can commission the Cybersurvey.

- A process is in place for handling safeguarding concerns.
- All schools are given an identifying code, no school or respondent names are used.
- All reports are available online and specialist briefing papers are written from time to time.
- Research papers based on the Cybersurvey data will be made available soon. All data and research papers derived from the Cybersurvey are the copyright of Youthworks.
- A new website will be launched at Easter 2018 to celebrate the tenth year of this collaborative effort.
About the sample

Responses from of 1961 young people were collected in the autumn term of 2017. The young people come from 26 different schools and are aged between 10 and 16 years old. 29 respondents are over sixteen, shown with 16 year olds as a single 16+ group. Respondents have a range of abilities, special educational needs and difficulties. (Another version of this survey was created for those with more complex difficulties and results are reported elsewhere.) Males and females are equally represented while 7% chose not to state their gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Tell us about you</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a carer</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need help with English</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am in care or have been</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a mental health difficulty</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a physical disability</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot see very well or at all</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot hear very well or at all</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have speech difficulties</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learning difficulties</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have other special educational needs</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have none of these needs or responsibilities</td>
<td>1171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ages

In this year’s sample the ages 10-13 are very well represented with fewer respondents between 14 and 16 years. This is a comparable sample to last year.
Key Messages

The Cybersurvey is run annually in Suffolk, enabling it to be used for evaluation, forward planning and watching trends. It provides insights into young people’s experiences and early alerts to trends.

The sample: Responses from of 1961 young people were collected in the autumn term of 2017 from 26 different schools and respondents are aged between 10 and 16 years old. There is a range of abilities, special educational needs and difficulties among the respondents. Males and females are equally represented while 7% did not wish to state their gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRENDS YEAR ON YEAR</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught about e-safety at school</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullied</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met up with person known only online</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexting</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of revenge sharing of images</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spends 5+ hours a day online</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremist content seen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very violent images/videos seen</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen content encouraging self-harm/suicide</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen content encouraging anorexia</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen content promoting racism/hatred</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone online tried to persuade you into</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unwanted sexual activity</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using chatrooms</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats (online) to harm me or my family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobic bullying online</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False solicitation, person not who they said</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult content seen</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited gambling sites</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age cohorts in the sample differed in 2014 it was a slightly older sample.

**Increased:**
- Spending 5+ hours a day online. Sites with: violent videos or images; extremist content; sites encouraging suicide and self-harm; sites encouraging anorexia; content promoting racism and hatred; threats to harm me or my family; cyberbullying.
- False solicitation; viewing adult content; homophobia.

**Stable/slight increase:**
- Revenge sharing of intimate images; visiting gambling sites; sexting (except 15 year olds).

**Decrease:**
- Using chatrooms; Meeting up with someone known online; (not 15yrolds) someone online tried to persuade you into sexual activity (slight drop).
- Young people saying parents did not give them advice on staying safe online.

**No increase:**
- Sites with: violent videos or images; extremist content; sites encouraging suicide and self-harm; sites encouraging anorexia; content promoting racism and hatred; threats to harm me or my family; cyberbullying.
Improvements since 2016
- There is an upturn in parental engagement since it was strongly flagged up last year. More parents are talking to their children about online safety at age 10, they are also less likely to reduce their advice after their child reaches age 12
- Fewer young people said they were using chatrooms – platforms which have been identified as high risk
- Slightly fewer young people said they had experienced someone online trying to persuade them into unwanted sexual activity (manipulative relationships)
- Fewer young people were meeting up with someone they knew only online except 15 year olds among whom this has increased.

Many aspects of online life show little change
- Incidents of fake solicitations – when someone turns out to be not the person they said they were – are low and remain so
- Numbers of those admitting to viewing adult content remains low
- Homophobic bullying online has been low in Suffolk for three years

A mixed picture
- Revenge sharing of intimate images after a relationship breaks down, often called revenge porn, shows no increase (but this could be due to the young age of the sample)
- Visiting gambling sites is low and stable in Suffolk in the total sample, despite concerns about children being lured into gambling. However there is an increase among 15 year olds
- Sexting remains low and has been stable for the past five years in the total sample. However among the 15 year olds it has risen this year from 11% to 17% and 16 year olds: up from 12% to 20%

What should be the focus now?
- 15 year olds are behaving differently from the total sample. High risks reported
- Overall more young people report seeing online content promoting hatred and racism; reports of this more than double between age 14-15 up from 20% to 42%. Last year it was reported by 28% of 15 year olds
- More young people report seeing very violent videos or images; the incidence is over 1/3 at age 15-16
- A higher percentage overall have seen extremist content, by age 15, more than 1 in 4 mention it (26%)
- More young people have seen sites encouraging anorexia than in any other year since 2014
- More young people report receiving online threats to harm them or their family than last year
- Cyberbullying has been stable for several years but shows a slight increase this year. This may be due to variations in the sample, but it is not advisable to ‘take the eye off the ball’
- Compared to last year, 15 year olds are more likely to: visit pro-anorexia sites, up by over a third; visit pro-self-harm sites; be involved in sexting and meeting up with someone they met online. All these are stable among younger age groups
- 18% of 15 year olds admit to going online to look at adult content but this is rare at younger ages
**Emotional health:** To obtain a picture of their general emotional health young people were asked: ‘Thinking about your life and future, how do you feel ‘most of the time’? While the majority feel positive - 48% feel happy and confident most of the time and 41% some of the time; 7% of young respondents feel depressed, 14% have worrying thoughts, 11% feel ‘I’m not good enough’ and 20% find it hard to concentrate. Many feel this way ‘sometimes’ as expected. There is a 5% drop in happiness and confidence since the last survey in 2016.

Responses differed markedly by gender. Boys are more optimistic and confident than girls, while one in five young people who prefer not to state their gender say ‘I feel I am not good enough most of the time’ and a quarter said they do not feel happy and confident. As our respondents get older they are less likely to be happy and confident. The majority of young people are resilient and coping well with their online lives, many are helping their peers if they have a bad experience. But there remain some vulnerable groups about whom we have reported regularly in recent years: they include those, who need help with English, young people in or leaving care, young carers, those with mental health difficulties, hearing or speech difficulties, vision loss, longstanding illness, learning difficulties, physical disability and other special educational needs. They may spend extensive time online and respond to their online experiences in particular ways. Research based on the Cybersurvey has identified specific groups of young people who are more at risk than their peers.1

Controversies rage about the issue known as ‘screen time’ and its impact on young people. This is a very broad term. Some refer to social media or smartphones, others include TV viewing and video games. Extensive research by Przybylski and Weinstein shows no damaging effects of using a range of media up to 2-3 hours per day but some increase in harm thereafter. ‘Moderate use of digital technology is not intrinsically harmful,’ they write, ‘and may be advantageous in a connected world’. They differentiate between weekday or weekend time and speculate that other factors, such as caregivers joining in could be more important for mental wellbeing than simply time spent.2 Parkes et al explored young children’s TV and video gaming habits and found conduct problems were more likely to be seen after lengthy TV watching than game playing.3 It is likely that the very lengthy periods online described by some of our respondents – 9 hours in the holidays, could be harmful and isolating. Other research recommends a focus on what is done online and in what context, rather than time only.4

These messages from young people contribute to our understanding. Frontline professionals need to keep well informed about this debate about the impact of internet use if they are to deliver suitable and timely advice that young people accept.

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2 Andrew K. Przybylski 1,2 and Netta Weinstein 3 1Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford; 2Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford; and 3School of Psychology, Cardiff University; A Large-Scale Test of the Goldilocks Hypothesis: Quantifying the Relations Between Digital-Screen Use and the Mental Well-Being of Adolescents.


4 Blum-Ross. A. & Livingstone, S. Policy Brief Media Policy Families and Screen Time http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/66927/1/Policy%20Brief%202017-%20Families%20Screen%20Time.pdf
Smartphone use grows fastest between the ages of 10 and 13 years. Ownership is close to 100% at ages 13 and 15.

Laptop use peaks at age 15.

Tablets are widely used (over 80% of ten year olds) but are less popular with 14-15 year olds.

Schools provide tablets for learning to 22% of ten year olds but only to 9% of 13 year olds.

Games console use changes less dramatically than other devices from 61% of 10 year olds to 67% of 14 year olds.

Despite the age limit for using social media being indicated as 13, we know that across the country under 13’s are using it. Use of social media rises fastest between ages 10 and 13 years, requiring appropriate safety advice to be given earlier. By 13, 80% have a social media profile.


**Emotional health**

The survey asked about emotional health at the start, before discussing online life and some potentially distressing issues. The aim was to obtain a picture of their general emotional health.

**How the young people feel ‘Most of the time’**: 48% fell happy and confident most of the time and 41% some of the time, but 7% of all our young respondents feel depressed, 14% have worrying thoughts, 11% say ‘I feel I’m not good enough’, 20% find it hard to concentrate. 36% ‘never’ feel depressed and only 4% say they never feel happy and confident.

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**Chart 5**

Thinking about your life and future, please tick any box that is closest to how you feel. All.
‘Thinking about your life and future, please tick any box that is closest to how you feel’.

There is considerable concern about the mental and emotional health of young people across the country amid a marked rise in recent years in hospital admissions for self-harm. Much has been written about possible links between social media and mental health. So it is easy to lose sight of the full range of responses to this question which includes those who are doing relatively well.

At least sometimes:

89% feel happy and confident
83% ‘just take life as it comes’
88% feel they will achieve their future goals

The majority are fairly happy, confident and relaxed about life in contrast to an important minority who feel depressed, lack confidence and hope. But there is a year on year drop in the percentage of those who feel happy and confident ‘most of the time’: 53% to 48%.

Gender plays a role: Boys are significantly more likely to be happy and confident ‘most of the time’ than girls or those who did not state their gender. Girls by contrast tend to be happy and confident ‘sometimes’, only 13% say they ‘hardly ever or never’ feel this way. Compare this with young people who prefer not to state their gender: 27% ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ feel happy and confident. On the other hand within this same group (those who do not state their gender) 43% do feel happy and confident most of the time – they compare well with girls on this measure. See chart 6.

The emotional and online lives of those who prefer not to state their gender run as themes throughout this report. They are in need of considerable support and their online lives require sensitive understanding and online safety education. One quarter do not believe they will achieve their goals for the future.
Girls are significantly less likely to say that they ‘never have worrying thoughts’ than other young people and more likely than boys to say they are troubled by worrying thoughts ‘most of the time’. Those who prefer not to state their gender are most likely to report having worrying thoughts ‘most of the time’ and this is significantly more than boys.
Gender and psychological wellbeing

Using Chi-Square tests, we examined the association between gender (Male, Female, preferred not to say) and the psychological wellbeing variables. There was a significant (p<0.01) association between gender and each of psychological wellbeing variables.

Across all, psychological wellbeing items, those who preferred not to state their gender were significantly (p<0.01) more likely to find it hard to concentrate, have worrying thoughts, feel depressed, feel ‘I am not good enough’, don’t believe they will achieve their goals, and do not feel happy and confident about themselves. Chart 8.

Age and psychological wellbeing

Chart 9 illustrates age differences in psychological wellbeing variables. The age groups of our respondents were grouped as: 10-12 years and 13-16+years. Psychological wellbeing variables were categorised into 2 answers: Yes, most of the time or Never. Chi-Square tests showed a significant association (p<0.01) between 6 of the psychological wellbeing items and age.

- Older teens were significantly less likely to feel happy and confident about themselves than younger children
- Older teens were significantly less likely to feel that they would achieve their goals
- Older teens were significantly more likely to say ‘I feel I am not good enough’
- Older teens were significantly more likely to feel depressed
- Older teens were significantly more likely to find it hard to concentrate.
- Younger children were slightly more likely to have more worrying thoughts than older teens

This is how they feel ‘most of the time’ given a choice of most of the time, sometimes, hardly ever and never

![Gender and Psychological Wellbeing Chart](chart8.png)
What do these tests tell us?

Associations can be observed between two questions or variables, but Chi Square ‘P’ tests look at the probability that this is due to chance. (Are the associations strong enough to be statistically significant?) The significance is strongest when the likelihood of it being chance is smallest. So the test looks at the probability that the associations occurred by chance rather than because of a relationship between the variables measure: \( p < 0.05 \) represents the probability of it being chance equal to or smaller than 5%, the maximum acceptable level; \( p < 0.001 \) is a chance of 0.1% that the results are accidental, therefore the significance is strongest) The P test allows us to generalise the findings to a bigger population. It does not prove cause and effect.
Does time spent online have an impact?

Those who spend 5+ hours per day online are four times more likely to say ‘most of the time I feel I am not good enough’ compared to those who spend an hour or less online per day. Yet there is less difference in the emotional health reported by young people who spend 2-3 hours per day online and those spending 1 hour. This suggests that being online for more than 3 hours per day might be the stage at which this measure of self-esteem is affected. It is not known whether people who feel they are ‘not good enough’ in the first instance are driven to spend more time online, or whether this emotion is the result of spending lengthy time online. It is possible that they already feel this way and long online periods and isolation may exacerbate this but there is no cause and effect that can be shown from these statistics.

Older students are spending longer periods online at an age when there is already a loss of confidence and an increase in depression:

As our respondents get older they are less likely to be happy and confident than the ten year olds, as shown in Chart 11.

Depression is higher among the mid to late teens. Those who tend to spend 5+ hours a day online are mostly 15 and 16 years old. The drop in confidence and the rise in depression come together after the mid-teens as shown.

At age 16, 25% feel happy and confident and 25% feel depressed.
12% of children and young people spend less than an hour a day online. At the other end of the scale 19% or almost one in five spend five or more hours online a day. 18% spend 3-4 hours and 20% spend 2-3 hours a day online. It seems that fewer (11%) spend 4-5 hours a day, suggesting that once they pass a threshold of 3-4 hours a day, young people tend to increase to five hours or more.

Which age groups spend most time online per day?

- 10% of 10 year olds
- 39% of 16 year olds

Almost one in five children and young people age 10-16 say they are online 5 or more hours per day.

**AGE and GENDER:**

Boys spend more time online than girls and those who did not state their gender spend even more time online than boys. More than 1/3 of 15 year olds spend 5+ hours a day online.
‘Schooldays: I spend 5 hours per day, weekends/holidays: 15 hours’
I do more than 14 hours per day as I move from computer to tablet to computer’
‘I just go on the internet to watch YouTube’
‘I go on my phone on and off throughout the day’
‘I game professionally’
‘I play my Xbox quite a lot with friends from school and I really enjoy it’
‘Different each day’
‘9 hour facetime calls’
‘I go on my phone when I need to and don’t spend continuous hours on it’
‘I don’t leave the room’
I spend most of my time on electronics, either doing my homework or my own thing. On a school day it goes from about 3.30pm to 11pm and on a weekend 10am to 2am

Vulnerable groups who spend 5+ hours a day online

- 39% of those with a mental health difficulty
- 33% of those with vision loss or difficulty
- 29% of those with speech difficulties
- 28% of those with hearing impairment or loss

Compared to 16% of those who have no difficulties or caring responsibilities
Screen time and psychological wellbeing

Recently screen time has received a lot of attention. In this section we aim to examine its association with vulnerable children (a group we are keenly following) and with psychological wellbeing questions. This is a brief selective section of inferential statistics.

Vulnerabilities as predictors of screen time:
Using Linear Regression analysis we have used a stepwise procedure, using all vulnerabilities as predictors of screen time (<1hr, 1-2hrs, 2-3hrs, 4-5hrs, and >5hrs). Vulnerabilities used here are: being a carer; being in foster care; having problems with the English language; having a long term illness; having a mental-health problem; physical disability; vision problems; hearing difficulties; speech difficulties; learning difficulties and other Special Educational Need.

It was evident that the regression model produced was significant (F=23.31, p<0.001) including two significant predictors (2 vulnerabilities).

- Those who said they have a mental health problem were significantly (p<0.001) more likely to spend more screen time than others
- Other vulnerabilities were not found to be significant predictors (p>0.05)

Psychological wellbeing predictors of time spent online:

Using Linear Regression, we attempted to predict time spent online using psychological wellbeing predictors:

- I feel happy and confident about myself (1=never, 0=yes)
- I feel I will achieve my goals (1=never, 0=yes)
- I feel I am not good enough (1=yes most of the time, 0=never)
- I feel depressed (1=yes most of the time, 0=never)
- I have worrying thoughts (1=most of the time, 0=never)
- I find it hard to concentrate (1=most of the time, 0=never)

5 Inferential statistics allow researchers to make an inference from the small sample (we are studying) to the bigger population. This offers the ability to generalise outcomes.
6 An inferential test that allows us to test whether or not any vulnerability leads to or predicts increased screen time.
7 The model can be used to predict screen time
8 P<0.05 refers to a chance of less than 5% of the results being due to chance. P<0.01 or p<0.001 are more conservative and show higher significance. P>0.05 shows no significance
The regression model was found to be significant ($F=24.52$, $p<0.001$). The model only included four significant predictors out of the six. These are:

- Those who are depressed “most of the time” are more likely to spend more time on screen ($p<0.001$).
- Those who find it hard to concentrate “most of the time” are more likely to spend more time on screen ($p<0.001$).
- Those who never feel good enough about themselves are more likely to spend more time on screen ($p<0.01$).
- Those who never feel they will achieve their goals are also more likely to spend more time on screen ($p<0.01$).

This suggests that asking young people how they feel about their lives and future may be a useful question when planning how best to support them to stay safe online.
How I feel about my smartphone

24% ‘often’ feel addicted to their Smartphone, rising to 34% over 16 years old

Are some young people more likely to report feeling addicted to their phones?

24% of all respondents ‘often feel addicted to my phone’.

- 33% of young people with hearing or vision loss. (They are the most likely of all vulnerable groups to say they often feel addicted to their Smartphone)
- 31% of those who need help with English
- 29% of young carers

Their response contrasts with:

- 23% of those who have no difficulties or caring roles

Without my phone I often feel irritable and anxious

- Those with mental health difficulties are twice as likely to say they often become irritable and anxious without their phones when compared to young people with no difficulties or caring responsibilities. 21% vs 10%

So do:

- 20% of those with vision impairments
- 19% of those with learning difficulties
- 18% of each of the following: those with hearing difficulties; speech difficulties and physical disabilities

‘I often feel irritable or anxious without my phone’ say:

10% of those with no difficulties or caring responsibilities,

21% of those with mental health difficulties
How your phone makes you feel

Young people could express how their phone makes them feel in an open question. Their answers are grouped into eight themes. It is possible that their relationship to their phone is an indicator of their approach to their digital life.

1. No different

These people say a phone makes no difference to how they feel. They take a practical no-nonsense approach seeing the phone as a tool only.

- ‘My phone doesn’t make me feel anything’
- ‘I like my phone but it does not influence me or my life or in how I behave’
- ‘The same as I do if I don’t have it’
- ‘My phone makes me feel no different to how I normally feel or am feeling at the time when I go on my phone’
- ‘It is just a phone’
- ‘My phone doesn’t make me feel anything it’s just an inanimate object’
- ‘It makes me feel just the same as I normally do (happy)’

2. A better version of me

For this group a phone provides a route to a ‘better version’ of themselves and a route to growing up, defining their styles and helping them feel ‘confident and powerful.’

- ‘It doesn’t really make me feel anything apart from taking a nice picture of something’
- ‘I have no attachment to my phone’
- ‘A phone’s a phone in my opinion it can’t really make anyone feel anything’
- ‘I don’t really care about my phone that much because I think that they are very anti-social and that people can spend too much time on them!’
- ‘I mainly use it to pass time, but wouldn’t be worried if I didn’t have it’

- ‘Not sure how a phone is supposed to make you feel any way’
- ‘Better in phone version than in real life’
- ‘(My phone makes me feel) quite confident about stuff and quite powerful’
‘I have different clothes styles and music tastes because of Instagram’

‘My phone makes me feel kind of a bit more grown up’

‘Some girls on the internet are very pretty so I want to look like them and I like to post like selfies or mirror selfies to show off my flaws Xx and I like to talk to my friends. When my mum and dad take my phone away from me I am very bored and moody because I don’t have my phone!’

‘(My phone makes me feel) like I exist in some way, if I make a page people will come to my page and give feedback on what I do. For example I have a singing page and my brother’s fans come to watch it and it makes me feel successful’

3. Status and belonging

A phone can indicate status or help someone feel accepted and even loved. While there is concern that young people may get bullied if they use social media, someone may be bullied for not being on social media

When I had a bad phone I didn’t want to use it in front of people’

‘It makes me fit in’

‘It makes me feel I am on the same level as everyone else’

‘It makes me feel like a better person, when I go onto social media otherwise I will get bullied that I’m not allowed social media’

(It makes me feel) ‘Happy and knowing people will like me better if I have a phone’

‘It makes me a person’

‘It is only for emergencies, but it does give me a sense of pride’

‘MY PHONE MAKES ME FEEL LOVED’

4. Safer

A phone can have a positive effect on feeling safer both because a young person can call a parent when they need to, but also for those who have difficulties in social situations or with hearing or vision, this device is liberating too for people on the autistic spectrum.

‘It helps me deal with everyday life because without it I don’t know where I would be because I struggle to talk to people at home because I am not willing to talk to my family about my struggles of everyday life’

‘It makes me feel safe, I can escape the constant task of maintaining appropriate eye contact during social confrontation’

‘My phone makes me feel safe because when I go out I like to make sure my mum’s okay and that she isn’t in any danger. My phone makes me feel like I know everything 😊’
Well I just feel that it is there if I need it, I have a severe allergy so if I do not have my phone I get very anxious although not irritable. I use it a lot but not as much as the next guy I suppose in the 21st century.’

‘When I have it with me when I am out I feel a little more safe because I know that if I get attacked I will be able to call someone like the police or if I need to go somewhere else I can call my parents and let them know’

5. A window on the world

Being able to access information, people and entertainment is described by this group.

‘I feel like a whole new world is open to me, being able to search anything, but I know some things are not appropriate so I watch out for those’

‘My phone makes me feel happy because I can talk to my friends and make new friends’

‘Happy, I love my phone it makes me feel free not alone. It lets me go on the internet to find things to watch or find out’

6. The relationship can be complex

This group illustrates a complex relationship with their phones, such as dependence and fear of losing their phone. Phones fulfil a need, make them feel less lonely, but contribute to feeling self-conscious about body image and a sense that others are talking about you.

‘Happy or entertained, I forget about worries’

‘Without my phone I’m quite scared because I tend to hurt myself and I just want to call my mum or dad to help me but I hate losing things and I would never want to lose my phone’

‘My phone is like a sister if it gets taken away it feels like my life has been taken with it’

‘(It makes me feel) Connected to the people that I can’t see often or at all anymore.’

‘When I’m laying down and go on my phone it makes me feel fat and self-conscious’

‘I can hear about whether people talk behind my back’
7. My phone changes my mood

There is a tendency to for adults to consider all dependence on a smartphone to be dangerous or detrimental but for some young people it can become an aid to living, or dealing with anxiety or managing their mood. Some see it as a companion, others a tool to calm them down or distract them from offline life.

(My phone) ‘makes me calm down if I get angry like on a relaxing game or watching makeup tutorials or other satisfying things’

‘IT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER WHEN I AM SAD OR DEPRESSED SO I CAN CHAT WITH MY FRIENDS THAT MAKE ME FEEL BETTER’

‘Sometimes I feel antisocial when I’m around people’

‘My phone makes me feel happy when I am sad cos I can download and delete old games and play cool games as well’

‘I feel relaxed with my phone because it makes a distraction; I don’t feel as nervous around people because I’m more focused on an object. Being out in public (especially at school) without a phone would just make me feel irritated and anxious because I need that distraction from others around me’

‘I feel worried when I do not have my phone because then if I get lost then I can’t contact an adult. I also get competitive with my friends about games’

‘I like my phone because I get to tell my mum or family members how I feel privately’

(My phone makes me feel) ‘happy because I haven’t got time to think about other stuff’

‘Say if I am scared to go upstairs and I think someone is there watching me and then I sit on my bed then I watch YouTube and then I don’t feel lonely’

‘Sometimes my phone makes me feel in a good mood or happy when I watch funny videos’

‘Happy, but sometimes it annoys me how many people brag about how they look, and that also makes me feel like I am not good enough.’

‘It’s not my phone it’s the music on it - I love music - will be depressed if I don’t have music’

(My phone) ‘Makes me feel like no one can judge me if they can’t see me’

‘My phone is my thing I use in awkward situations’

‘It makes me feel less lonely’
8. The essential phone – a part of me

These young people see the phone as an extension of self; a body part.

‘All day and all night’

‘It’s 24/7’

‘I’d feel incomplete if for any reason, I lost my phone’

‘My phone is like stuck to my hand 24/7 so it is like a part of me’

‘My phone is me’
How does your smartphone make you feel?

1. No different
   ‘A phone’s a phone it doesn’t make me feel anything’

2. A better version of me
   ‘I look better than in real life’
   ‘It makes me feel I exist in some way’

3. Status and belonging
   ‘It makes me fit in’
   ‘It makes me a person’

4. Safer
   ‘It helps me deal with life’
   ‘I don’t have to have eye contact’
   ‘I can ring my mum’

5. A window on the world
   ‘I can search for anything’
   ‘I feel free, not alone’

6. Complex
   ‘My phone’s like a sister, if it gets taken away it feels like my life’s been taken with it’

7. Mood changing
   ‘It makes me calm down if I’m angry like on a relaxing game’

8. The essential phone
   My phone is like stuck to my hand 24/7, so it is like part of me
   ‘I’d feel incomplete without it’

24% feel addicted to their smartphones

Almost 1/4 of young people questioned feel addicted to their smartphones. This rises to 1/3 of young people with hearing or vision loss. 29% of young carers often feel addicted to their phones, along with 31% of those who need help with English.

Compared to their peers with no difficulties, those with mental health difficulties are twice as likely to report becoming ‘irritable and anxious’ without their phones.

1 in 5 young people with disabilities said they often feel addicted to their phone.
The role of gender

Respondents were offered options to describe themselves as: Boy, Girl or Prefer not to say. Those who prefer not to state their gender are shown throughout this report as not stated: NS.

We have seen that those who chose not to state their gender were more likely than those who identify as boys or girls to lack confidence, have worrying thoughts, feel depressed or feel ‘I am not good enough’. These are emotions that may be present in their lives generally before they go online or pick up a smartphone. Do social networks contribute to or cause their mental and emotional health problems? Cause and effect cannot be proven via a one-time survey, nor is it known whether existing emotional distress is exacerbated by their online experiences. Some young people gain comfort and support from others online or use discreet helplines. But the distress and isolation they describe requires an intervention with sensitive support.

Those who prefer not to state their gender are significantly more likely than boys or girls to say that:

- Without my phone I get irritated or anxious
- Social media influences how I try to look
- My phone makes me feel confident
- I am online more than five hours per day
- I have often visited online gambling sites (numbers are small)
- The internet caused difficulties with my friends and family
- The internet left me with thoughts and feelings that were upsetting
- The internet affected my relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend because one of us had viewed pornography (numbers are small)
- The internet left me feeling edgy and nervous
- The internet left me feeling depressed
- The internet made it possible to do new things
- Bullying or aggression online aimed at LGBT or gay people happened to me
- I received threats to harm me or my family
- I have met up in real life with someone I met online (numbers are small)
- Involved in sexting (numbers are small)

They are more likely than girls to say ‘the internet helped me make friends.’

They are more likely to insist that they ‘never’ felt addicted to their smartphone than either boys or girls, yet a larger percentage of them admits feeling irritated and anxious if without their phone than either girls or boys. They are most likely to say their phone gives them confidence.

They are least likely to get advice on staying safe online from parents and least likely to follow the advice if they do get it. Their parents tend not to check whether games or films are age appropriate.

They are actively making their own videos and creating tracks and looking at pages meant for adults. Almost 1/3 go online to find new friends which may be why they are more than twice as likely to visit chatrooms compared to boys or girls.
The issues that worry them include:

‘The rollback on net neutrality’
‘A rapist’
‘Getting my Roblox account banned or stolen’
‘People making inappropriate websites’
‘I worry about images of me being leaked on the deep web’
‘Men or women trying to make me do inappropriate things for them or things I don’t like’

‘It always worries me that an old man is just going to be texting me and pretending to be like a good friend or a boyfriend’
‘Porn’
‘Getting hacked’
‘Getting scammed out of my money’
‘Identity theft’

This list, from an open question simply marked ‘other’ illustrates how online safety education focuses on the online risks so intensely, creating a new set of worries for young people. It should be possible to teach online safety in a more confidence-inducing and problem solving manner to reduce the amount of worry young people describe.

Girls

Girls are three times more likely than boys to say ‘the internet caused difficulties with my friends’. Girls are chatting to friends more than boys and researching information for homework, but are less active in coding or learning IT skills. They shop and watch videos; movies and TV content, but compared to boys, fewer make their own videos or tracks. Girls are more likely to be influenced by social media when creating their look and are more active posting photos than boys. They are more likely to report being involved in sexting.

Boys

Boys spend more time online than girls, often gaming, looking at or making videos and tracks; watching movies and TV. They are least likely to use learning apps or shop. There is little difference in the rates between girls or boys saying they feel addicted to their phones, but boys claim to be less likely to adapt their look due to the influence of social media. Parents give less advice on staying safe online to their sons than to their daughters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffolk Cybersurvey 2017</th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>I prefer not to state gender (NS = not stated)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of gender: I go online to...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post photos/videos</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Girls more likely than boys to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat to my friends</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>Girls are more likely than boys to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>Boys are more likely than either girls or NS to go online for gaming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn i.e. maths games, drawing apps, sports how-to</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Boys are less likely to do so than girls or NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out things for homework/studies or personal</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Girls are more likely to do so than boys or NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share what I'm doing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to do this than girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch videos, movies or TV</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Boys less likely than girls or NS to shop online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find new friends or talk to new people</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to do so than girls or boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use chatrooms</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to use chatrooms than boys or girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my own videos or tracks</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to do so than girls or boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at pages meant for adults</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to do so than girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new skills or coding</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Girls are less likely than boys or NS to code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more than five hours per day online</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>NS are more likely than boys or girls to spend 5+ hours online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffolk Cybersurvey 2017</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Prefer not to say (NS)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of gender: Relationships with smartphones</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever felt addicted to your smartphone? Answer: Never</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>NS more likely than both groups to say they’ve never felt addicted to their phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever decided to try and take a break from your phone? Often</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>NS are more likely than boys or girls to try to take a break from their phone,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without my phone I get irritated or anxious. Often</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>NS are more likely than boys or girls to get irritated or anxious without a phone (often)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media influences my style (how I try to look) Often</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>NS are more likely than boys to say social media influences their style,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My phone makes me feel confident Often</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>NS are more likely to say my phone ‘often makes me feel confident’ than either boys or girls,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
The role of age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESS</th>
<th>What young people use to go online at different ages; by age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smartphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10yrs</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11yrs</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12yrs</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13yrs</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14yrs</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16yrs</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By age 15, 99% of Suffolk teenagers have a Smartphone, 15% use a school tablet for learning. Ages 12-14 are least likely to be using a school tablet for learning. 81% of 10 year olds have a tablet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you go online to do?</th>
<th>To post photos &amp; videos</th>
<th>To chat to friends</th>
<th>For gaming</th>
<th>Streaming, films, video, TV</th>
<th>To find new friends</th>
<th>To look at adult content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 yrs</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11yrs</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12yrs</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13yrs</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14yrs</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential risk situations online. By age

There is a marked increase in sexting, viewing pro anorexia sites, self-harm content and sites promoting violence, hatred or racist views in ages 14-15.
## High risk experiences online; by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I met up with someone I met online</th>
<th>Seen pro-anorexia sites</th>
<th>Seen sites encouraging self-harm</th>
<th>Seen sites promoting violence, hatred or racist views</th>
<th>Involved in sexting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10-11 year olds did not answer these questions

### NB!
Not only do the high risk situations described in the table above rise markedly after age 14, but year on year a rise has been noted.

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyberbullying</th>
<th>20% of 15 year olds:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10yrs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11yrs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12yrs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13yrs</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14yrs</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8

#### Age 10
10 year olds are the age group least likely to say they were taught to stay safe online by their school

63% were taught to stay safe online by their parents

60% of 10 year olds say ‘the internet stops me from feeling bore’

#### Age 12
16% of 12 year olds have come across sites with very violent images or videos

10% of 12 year olds have come across sites promoting hatred, violence or racist views

16% of 12 year olds have felt someone (not parents) was trying to control me through social media or my phone

#### Age 14
22% of 14 year olds learn to stay safe online from another family member (not parent)

From age 14 length of time spent on screen begins to markedly increase, peaking at 15-16.

Cyberbullying is most likely at age 14 (35% compared to 22% of the total sample)

Those aged 14-15 are least likely to tell anyone that they have been cyberbullied
**Age 15**

44% of 15 year olds have seen pro-anorexia websites

29% of 15 year olds have seen websites encouraging self-harm or suicide

1 in 5 of 15 year olds says they have not been taught how to stay safe online

15 year olds were least likely to say the cyberbullying actually stopped if they did tell someone (42% of those who told someone about it) compared to 64% of the total sample

45% of 15 year olds believe the internet helped them make a good relationship with someone.

29% have met up offline with someone they met online

Sexting is most common at age 15-16: 17% of 15 year olds are sexting (even higher 20% at age 16) but until this age, sexting is very rare

One in five 15 year olds say they often feel irritable and anxious if they are without their phone.
The role of parents

68% of young people were taught to stay safe online by parents/carers. Parental advice and support is important – 67% of respondents say they always listen to their parents’ advice while 25% sometimes do. But too few parents give it, despite the increase since last year. Girls are more likely than boys to listen to their parents’ advice about online safety. Parents do less to check their sons are viewing appropriate films or playing games suitable for their age group. Young people who prefer not to state their gender receive least advice from parents and are least likely to heed this if they do get it. This suggests that parents need information on how to address gender sensitive advice about the online environment with their children.

### Listening to advice from parents, all respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you listen to your parents/carers’ advice about online safety?</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they check that films are rated OK for your age group?</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they check that games are rated OK for your age group?</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they try to limit the time you can spend online?</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents appear to give advice and retain some oversight of the content their children view at the age of 10-12 years, but after that they reduce this dramatically until by age 16 they barely give advice on time spent or content viewed. Despite this young people are fairly likely to listen to their parents’ advice or rules.

Parental input has increased since 2016 with more young people reporting that they have received this advice. However, there are reasons to continue this trend so that more children are supported.

- Parents need information on PEGI ratings, checking film and streaming content suitability. Only 48% of 12-year-olds said their parents check whether films or videos are rated OK for their age.
- Parents are generally not limiting the time their children spend online.
- Parents may need advice on how to help mid-teens to stay safe online.
I was shown how to stay safe online by parents/carers. Year on year comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14yrs</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13yrs</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12yrs</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11yrs</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10yrs</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greatest year on year increase in parental engagement is seen among young people aged 11 and 15.

Nevertheless, 44% of 15 year olds say their parents have not talked to them about staying safe online.
The role of vulnerability

In earlier Cybersurvey reports we have identified several groups of young people who appear more vulnerable online than their peers.

These are:

- Young carers
- Young people in or leaving care
- Those who need help with English
- Young people suffering chronic illness
- Those with a mental health difficulty
- Those with a physical disability
- Those who have some vision loss
- Those who have some hearing loss
- Those with speech difficulties
- Those who have learning difficulties
- Those with any other SEN

The Cybersurvey has regularly compared their responses to those of their peers who have no difficulties or caring responsibilities. The aim is to identify the type of support and targeted online safety that they might need.

A move away from generic online safety messages is called for, with a nuanced approach that takes into account what they tend to experience online and their patterns of online behaviour. Messages should also be adapted to be age and stage appropriate.

Our research programme has undertaken further in depth work on this issue.

In the table which follows the trends are indicated showing which issues are coming to the fore for these young people.
### Table 9

| Groups significantly more likely to report each scenario when compared to peers with no difficulties + all vulnerable groups | Carer | Help with English | LAC | Chronic illness | MHD | Physical disability | Vision | Hearing | Speech | LD | Other SEN* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cybersurvey 2017 by Youthworks** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Using chatrooms | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | |
| My phone makes me feel confident | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | |
| I often feel addicted to it | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | |
| Without my phone I often get anxious/irritable | | | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| Social media often influences my look/style | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | |
| I spend 5+ hours a day online | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | |
| In last week internet often left me with upsetting thoughts & feelings | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | |
| In the last week internet often left me feeling depressed | | | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| In the last week internet often helped me relax after school | | | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| In the last week has internet often helped you make friends? | | | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Had my social media account hacked | | | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| I’ve visited gambling sites (ever) | | ● | | | ● | | | | | | |
| Experienced fake solicitation | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | |
| Online homophobic bullying/aggression | | | | ● | | | | | | | |
| Online bullying/aggression religion | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| Threats to harm me or my family | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | |
| Online bullying/aggression racist | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | |
| Online bullying/aggression disability | | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Met up with someone known online | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| Seen websites selling illegal goods | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | |

LAC = looked after children. MHD = mental health difficulty, LD = Learning difficulties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carer Help with English</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>Chronic illness</th>
<th>MHD</th>
<th>Physical disability</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>LD</th>
<th>Other SEN*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seen pro-anorexia sites: often</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen sites encouraging self-harm or suicide: often</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen content with nude images or videos I did not search for</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen very violent images/videos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen websites supporting extremist or terrorist acts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever felt someone was trying to control you through phone or social media?</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made uncomfortable or scared when someone you met online tried to persuade you to give personal details</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone you met online tried to persuade you into unwanted sexual activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a relationship has ended has an ex partner or friend tried to take revenge by sharing intimate photos or video of you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there ways the internet helped you make a good relationship with someone? Yes Often</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in sexting</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been cyberbullied? Yes</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been taught how to stay safe online? No</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned about online safety from a friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or carers check suitability of online games: Never</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*‘Other SEN’ = any special educational need not mentioned in these categories of vulnerability, such as autism.*
What children and young people go online to do

Young people are enjoying a wide range of activities online in addition to watching movies or TV, gaming or chatting. They are learning and researching, shopping and organising their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn new IT skills or coding</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To watch or learn about sport</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out about gigs, matches or tickets</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To plan travel</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For shopping</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To watch videos, movies or TV</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To share what I'm doing</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out things for homework/studies or for me</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For learning fun: maths games or drawing apps</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To play games</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To chat to my friends</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To post photos/videos</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online life, all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To look at pages meant for adults</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make my own videos or tracks</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit chatrooms</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find new friends or talk to new people</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13% seek new friends, 13% create their own videos or tracks, 8% visit chatrooms 6% look at pages meant for adults.
Much has been said recently about the way gambling sites lure young children in numerous ways. 6% of our respondents have visited online gambling sites. There is no overall increase since 2016 but 15 year olds are the exception.

Online lives described by vulnerable children and young people
The impact of the digital world on young people has been the subject of many sensationalist headlines recently that suggest the impacts are all harmful. These include the impacts of social media on mental health or video games on aggression. This is not always based on robust evidence as a group of academics have come together to make clear. In this survey young people with communication difficulties such as speech or hearing are going online to ‘find new friends’ far more than their peers. Some of these encounters may be harmful, others may be supportive. Teenagers with mental health difficulties are often directed to legitimate support groups by professionals, while other encounters they may have online could be high risk or hurtful. Young people with difficulties can gain from communicating with others who have a similar experience. It is not helpful to label all encounters as harmful.

While 20% of young people with no difficulties said: ‘the internet has often helped me make friends’, this rose to:

- 46% among those with speech difficulties
- 41% among those with mental health difficulties
- 35% of looked after children
- 35% of those with hearing loss
- 34% of those with other special educational needs
- 32% of those who need help with English
- 27% of young carers
- 27% of those who have a physical disability
- 26% of those who have a vision impairment

84% of those with a longstanding illness said they had been able to look after themselves online in contrast to 75% of all respondents with no difficulties.

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**What do you go online to do?** The 14 most commonly mentioned words or phrases size indicates how frequently they are mentioned. YouTube and Snapchat remain the most popular followed by Instagram.

- YouTube
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Minecraft
- Roblox
- Learning apps
- Music/Spotify
- Facebook
- Minecraft
- Learning apps
- Roblox
- Gaming
- Whatsapp
- Instagram
- Snapchat

**What do you enjoy online? All.**

- YouTube: 22%
- SnapChat: 20%
- Xbox: 12%
- Learning apps: 11%
- Art drawing manga anime: 7%
- Photos/Pinterest: 6%
- Football/sport: 5%
- Musically: 4%
- Music/Spotify: 3%
- Minecraft: 2%
- Art drawing manga anime: 2%
- Football/sport: 2%
- Photos/Pinterest: 2%

*(How much time do you spend online?) ‘As much as possible, gaming is life’*
The impact of the internet

Risk encounters are stable, but not among 15 year olds
There is a wide variety of patterns young people describe when they consider their time online. Many are at pains to explain that they go online a lot but do not use or are not allowed to use, social media. Others go online for learning. Another set of people do not have Wi-Fi at home so their online life is entirely via their phone and may be restricted. There are of course many who are continuously online, or linked with others via social media. But there is also a sense among young people that they can manage their online lives. Their worries and concerns are not always the same as those described by adults or media headlines.

A user can encounter risk in half an hour online, so time spent, or ‘screen time’ is not the only indicator of risk. Age, context, vulnerability, emotional health and what they go online to do or visit are all factors that contribute to their online experience. There is minimal change in the rates of risks encountered between 2016 and 2017 in the total sample, but this is not the case among 15 year olds, among whom we note considerable increases i.e. sexting up from 11% to 17%, seen pro-anorexia sites up from 35% to 44% and seen sites encouraging self-harm up from 16% to 29%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year on Year Comparison, total samples</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2016</strong></td>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% visited gambling sites</td>
<td>6% visited gambling sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% experienced fake solicitation</td>
<td>5% experienced fake solicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14% met up with someone known only online</td>
<td>12% met up with someone known online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% experienced revenge sharing of images</td>
<td>6% experienced revenge sharing of images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% someone tried to persuade you into unwanted sexual activity</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% Sexting</td>
<td>4.6% Sexting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19% cyberbullied</td>
<td>22% cyberbullied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harmful contact can take many different forms. Most common for teens is interference in their social media account that may amount to hacking. It is most likely among 15 year olds (32%).
Harmful content
Harmful contact is often overlooked as the debate focuses on the potential harms of social media. But the number of young people viewing pro-anorexia websites remains high. 29% of our respondents have seen this type of content at least once or twice. The age group in which this is most commonly seen is 14-15 years (over 1/3) but it should be noted that by age 12 years, 22% have already seen a pro-anorexia site at least once or twice.

Harmful conduct
By age 15 and 16 young people are more likely to be sharing self-generated intimate images than at any earlier age. While only 5% of the total sample has been involved in ‘sexting’ at age 15 years, 17% are involved in sharing images they ‘would not want their family to see’ and at age 16+ it is 20%. Girls are more than twice as likely as boys to do this.

Harmful commerce
3% of the total sample report problems with credit card details being taken. 6% have been tricked into paying for something they did not intend to buy online and another 6% have found that the goods they bought were fake. 20% say they have come across websites trying to sell them goods that might be illegal.
Of the three groups, boys derive the greatest benefit when they’re using the internet to relax after school or to combat boredom although they are often left tired and sleepy. For them, the internet is not likely to cause difficulties with their friends (3%) in contrast to girls (9%) or the NS group (16%). Young people who prefer not to state their gender appear more likely to be negatively affected by their internet use in a range of ways, although on the other hand it often helped them to make new friends. Girls use the internet less than either of the other groups to make new friends, or to ‘do new
things, however on the plus side, girls are less likely to blame the internet for causing difficulties with their family than both boys and the NS group.

Fake solicitation is the term used to describe a situation where ‘someone seemed interested in me then turned out not to be who they said they were’. This is more commonly experienced by those who prefer not to state their gender. There is no difference between girls and boys on this issue.

**Gender and online risk experiences**

- **Fake solicitation**: 5% (Girl), 5% (Boy), 14% (Prefer not to say)
- **Been tricked into buying fake goods**: 4% (Girl), 7% (Boy), 14% (Prefer not to say)
- **Been tricked into paying for something online I did not want to buy**: 5% (Girl), 6% (Boy), 12% (Prefer not to say)
- **Had credit card details stolen and used**: 1% (Girl), 3% (Boy), 10% (Prefer not to say)
- **Visited online gambling sites**: 3% (Girl), 9% (Boy), 20% (Prefer not to say)
- **Had my social media account hacked or stolen**: 17% (Girl), 15% (Boy), 21% (Prefer not to say)

Boys are three times more likely than girls to visit online gambling sites and almost twice as likely as girls to be tricked into buying fake goods.
Thinking about the last week, do you think the internet has affected you in any of these ways?

It happened at least once or twice...

- 73% of respondents say the internet has made it possible for me to do new things
- 26% say it has left them feeling depressed
- 31% say it left them feeling edgy and nervous
- 41% say it left them with thoughts and feelings that were upsetting
- 4% say their relationship was affected because one partner had viewed pornography
- 31% say it affected their school or college work
- 62% say it left them feeling tired and sleepy
- 15% say it caused difficulties with a boy/girlfriend
- 23% say it caused difficulties with family
- 43% say it caused difficulties with friends

It happened often...

- 5% were ‘often’ left feeling depressed and 6% felt edgy and nervous
- 7% ‘often’ found their schoolwork affected
• 6% said the internet ‘often’ caused difficulties with friends and left them with upsetting thoughts and feelings
• 18% were left feeling tired and sleepy

Positive impacts include:

• 85% say it helped them relax after school
• 92% said it stopped them feeling bored
• 51% say it has helped them make new friends
• 74% say it made it possible for them to do new things
Relationships

Meeting up

- 12% of our sample met up with someone they only knew online
- Before they went to meet up, 76% told someone of their plans, 75% took someone along
- 82% met someone their age, 20% travelled a long distance to meet, 9% went out of county
- 40% were worried about something that happened and told someone about this

These meet ups may be ‘a couple of hours in town’ or a whole day. In one case ‘About 12 hours for 2 days in a row at a festival thing, then we met up for a concert the next year.’ Some young people said they spent a day with this person and added ‘...and now we are good friends’ but most said it was two hours or a day. One wrote that they had spent four days with the person they went to meet.

Manipulative relationships

Smartphones can be used to check on someone, to exert some form of control and are often a tool for jealous partners. In the questions illustrated in the below we explore manipulative relationships which were enabled by digital technology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Often (%)</th>
<th>Once or twice (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there ways in which the internet helped you make a good relationship with someone?</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a relationship has ended has an ex-partner or friend tried to take revenge by posting a personal photo/video of you?</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has someone you met online tried to persuade you into some sexual activity you did not want?</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been made to feel uncomfortable or scared by someone you met online who tried to make you give personal details?</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been asked to give your social media passwords to a close friend?</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever felt someone was trying to control you through smartphone or social media?</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing values for ‘often’ = 1%
**Sexting**

65 young people said they had shared a photo or video of themselves online that was very revealing, nude and that they would not want their family to see this. Their reasons are varied and important for educators to consider. If giving advice to young people, their motivation should be taken into account so that a blanket command is never given. Perhaps their emotional need or motivation can be met safely in some other manner?

- Of these 65 young people, 5 said they were repeatedly (often) pressured or blackmailed to do it, while a further 7 said that they were pressured or blackmailed once or twice
- 5 said they often did not want to but felt they had to do this because others do it. A further 8 said they felt this once or twice
- 4 people said they were actually tricked into sharing this image – it clearly happened several times as they ticked the box ‘often’ while another 3 said it happened to them once or twice
- 17 young people said they were in a relationship and often wanted to share the image/s, while 5 said that they were in a relationship and once or twice had wanted to share the image
- 11 people said they had often simply tried it for fun while another 9 people had done so once or twice
- 10 people said they often did this because they wanted to see what reaction they would get from the other person or people. 6 young people said they did this once or twice for this reason
- 9 people said they were in a relationship and often felt it was expected of them. 5 people felt this once or twice
- 13 people shared the image/s often because they thought they looked good. 9 people tried this once or twice attributing it to the same reason

**Asked what happened after they posted or shared these images or videos:**

- 51 of the 65 said ‘nothing happened to me’
- 5 were bullied
- 2 felt humiliated
- 5 felt embarrassed
- 4 suffered blackmail and pressure to send more images
- 1 said they were not prepared for what happened when the image got shared with other people.
What happened after you shared this photo?

‘Got told off’

‘i posted a photo and someone commented and we started chatting and we ended getting together and then he blackmailed me’

My ex-boyfriends friend started messaging me and he sent nude photos and he told me to send some, but I never did and he said that if I didn't he would come to my house’

‘I got sent some pictures back’

‘My photo was sent around my whole school and someone hacked my snapchat and this person posted on my story with a comment saying 'boys enjoy' and i was called the boys enjoy girl. After this it look 2 whole years to calm down until i had 4 girls endlessly bullying me and i cut myself.’
Parents and schools remain the most likely source of online safety education for young people, but a sizeable group (almost one in five) learned from another relative and another 17% learned from a friend. 10% say they have not been taught how to stay safe online and on mobiles. The role of clubs and groups may be important here as 14% said they learned at one of these settings.

These results suggest that it is worth providing families, groups and clubs and peers with resources and advice so that they can help young people. There is a risk of young people sharing weak or incorrect advice and everything should be done to support them in helping one another. 31% say they have helped someone else who had a bad experience online.

Parents increase their support
In 2016 we focused on the lack of parental advice about online safety that young people reported. A sudden decrease after age 12 was found in parents talking to their teens about life online, on mobiles and when gaming. They did not do enough for younger children and fell away further after the age of 12. An infographic was created which was viewed 2172 times after being shared at the conference:
https://infogram.com/_/8jT7z1ftZ9xq3zsOBXlw.
This suggests schools and other agencies have been working with parents.

This year there is an evident increase in parents engaging with this issue. Age 12 remains at similar levels but overall parents have become more engaged.
I helped someone by:

‘Talked to them about it and tried to come to a solution’

‘...so my friend was getting bullied by my other friend (I knew them in real life they go to my school) so what I did is I let him talk to me in private about what was bothering him and I talked to the friend that bullied him and I said is anything going on at home that makes you feel like you should bully people? And he told me some stuff I told him to apologise and now we are all good friends.’

‘I helped them by saying if this person keeps on stalking you tell a parent or someone you trust and report and block straight away!’

How good was the advice?
Half of our respondents say the advice they received on how to stay safe online; on mobiles or when gaming was very good. A further 40% say it was quite good. That is an approval rating of 91%. 9% say it was either not good enough or useless. The percentage of young people who say they always follow this advice is above two thirds (68%).

**NB** In 2016 57% said they always followed the advice whereas this year 62% do so.

‘I told my friend to tell an adult when someone online told her to do something inappropriate’

‘I told them they should tell someone as they felt destroyed’

‘I got rid of their virus’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>if you have been taught how to stay safe online, on mobiles or when gaming, do you listen to this advice? (ALL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 32
List of Charts

Charts

1. About the sample; Gender
2. About the sample; Age
3. Access: what they use to go online
4. On social media, by age
5. Emotional health: thinking about your life and future... by all
6. Do you feel happy and confident? By gender
7. I feel depressed; by gender
8. Gender and psychological wellbeing
9. Frequency of those exhibiting negative psychological wellbeing
10. Emotional health: How do you feel most of the time, by time spent online
11. Emotional health and age
12. Time spent online per day
13. Those who spend 5+ hours a day online; gender
14. Potential risk situations online, by age
15. I have not been shown how to stay safe online by parents/carers; by gender of child
16. Listening to advice from parents: all respondents
17. Online safety given by parents; by age group
18. Online safety never given by parents; by age group
19. I was shown how to stay safe online by parents year on year comparison
20. What do I go online to do? All
21. Online life, all
22. What do you enjoy online?
23. Online risks encountered: all respondents
24. Have you ever come across sites that...
25. Do you think the internet has affected you in any of these ways?
26. Gender online risk experiences, all respondents
27. Impacts of the internet; all
28. Manipulative relationships online
29. Have you been taught how to stay safe online and on mobiles?
30. I was shown how to stay safe online by parents/carers
31. If you were taught how to stay safe online how good was this advice? All
32. If you have been taught how to stay safe online do you listen to this advice? All

Tables

1. Tell us about you
2. Trends year on year
3. The role of gender: I go online to...
4. The role of gender: relationship with Smartphones
5. Access: what young people use to go online
6. What do you go online to do?
7. High risk experiences online; by age
8. Cyberbullying by age
9. Groups more likely to report each scenario compared to peers without difficulties
10. Have you been taught to stay safe online? By age