



e-Safer Suffolk

# The Suffolk Cybersurvey 2016

---

**Executive summary**

*Youthworks Consulting - Adrienne Katz*

## **FOREWORD**

Welcome to our sixth annual Cybersurvey report, commissioned by the e-Safer Suffolk Online Safety Strategic Group, and carried out in conjunction with Youthworks Consulting Ltd.

This year we have we have received over 3,000 responses, an amazing return and we thank all our partners who have supported children and young people to explain about their online lives and experiences.

I also want to acknowledge the more than 17,000 children and young people who have participated in the cybersurvey across the years. Their invaluable input has helped provide a clear focus on online safety in Suffolk as part of an overall safeguarding approach.

Our survey showed that 83% of 10 – 11 year olds have access to either a smartphone or a tablet, and the majority have access to both reflecting the same levels of access as elsewhere in the country.

This emphasises the need for parents and carers to have an awareness of how to protect their child, as soon as children are given access to internet-enabled devices. We will continue to empower parents and carers to feel confident about how to educate their children regarding using the internet safely.

Online safety is our collective responsibility. Our partnership approach is leading to results, the trends in risk taking behaviour are reducing. However, in this ever changing “online-world”, we cannot afford to lessen our 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 the e-Safer Suffolk Online Safety Strategic Group**

**Contents**

About the Cybersurvey ..... 3

About the sample..... 4

Executive summary ..... 6

## About the Cybersurvey

The Cybersurvey online questionnaire has run annually for nine years in various local authority areas. This report represents data collected in Suffolk in autumn 2016.

Respondents are anonymous, but a code, IP address and other identifying characteristics allow safeguarding measures to be provided if someone reveals an issue of concern. Alerts are sent to the local authority if any respondents appear unsafe or have written a distressed message in an open question. They follow up with the school using the school code, the IP address, date and time of the entry, the gender and age of the respondent.

### Questionnaire development and youth participation

The Cybersurvey was developed in 2008 with extensive consultation involving professionals in Dudley, Solihull, Birmingham and Oxfordshire. Young people in youth participation groups or advisory groups to the Dudley MBC were involved, (Dudley Decision Makers and Dudley Youth Shadow Safeguarding Group.) supported by the Youth Participation Team. This was followed by a pilot run in Essex with 158 young people. Wording of the questions was tested with young people to ensure good understanding of terms and they were encouraged to suggest questions. Among the professionals from the four local authorities were safeguarding leads, e-safety champions, anti-bullying co-ordinators, community safety police officers and an educational psychologist. Youthworks manages the continuing development process, consultations, edits and reports annually. To date over 35,000 young respondents have contributed over nine years.

Each year, some questions have been modernised. The fast changing nature of the online environment and arrival of new devices means that there is a need to evolve. The 2014 version, broadened out from cyberbullying to look at a wider range of online scenarios. The schools inspectorate, Ofsted announced the wider concept 'online safety', the following autumn. They drew 'attention to the need to reflect a widening range of issues associated with technology and user's access to content, contact with others and behavioural issues.' There had been several high profile suicides in the country linked with cyberbullying during 2013-2014 and rates of self-harm have been rising steadily in recent years. Local government and schools wished to respond and include a wider range of issues in the Cybersurvey.

Workshops with students maintain the pupil involvement input. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the survey has been run in Suffolk enabling year on year comparisons. Suffolk has continually helped to re-shape the questionnaire for which we wish to thank Marisa Batson.

A research programme is now running alongside the surveys. This gives an added dimension to the reports, books and training. Dr Aiman El Asam of the University of Kingston is leading this programme.

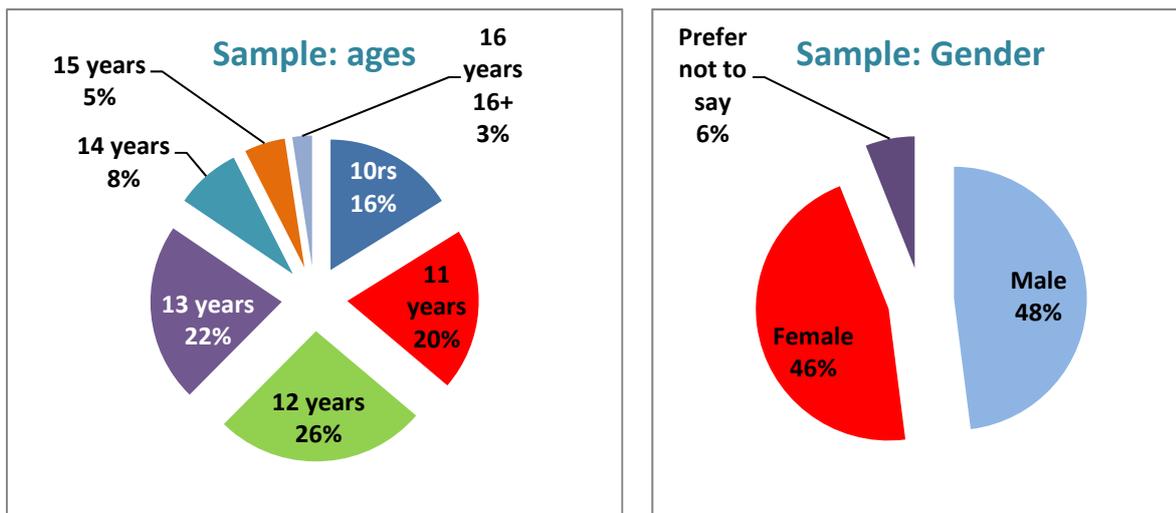
The information in this report is aimed at improving online safety delivery, refining responses to cases with an online component and evaluating progress year on year. Any service is welcome to use this information with their teams and with young people.

Adrienne Katz

# About the sample

Data was collected in the autumn term of 2016 from education settings and youth organisations across Suffolk. 3142 responses were analysed. Responses were disqualified if people said they never go online or they do not use any of the devices listed to access the internet. Schools were provided with a code in order to test and preview the survey, all responses with this code were removed before analysis.

**Age:** The largest age group is 12-13.



## Gender

The sample is 48% male, 46% female while 6% of respondents chose 'prefer not to say'.

## Age

The largest cohort is 12 years old with two other large groups aged 11 and 13 years while 10 year olds make up 16% The over 13 year olds make up a further 16%.

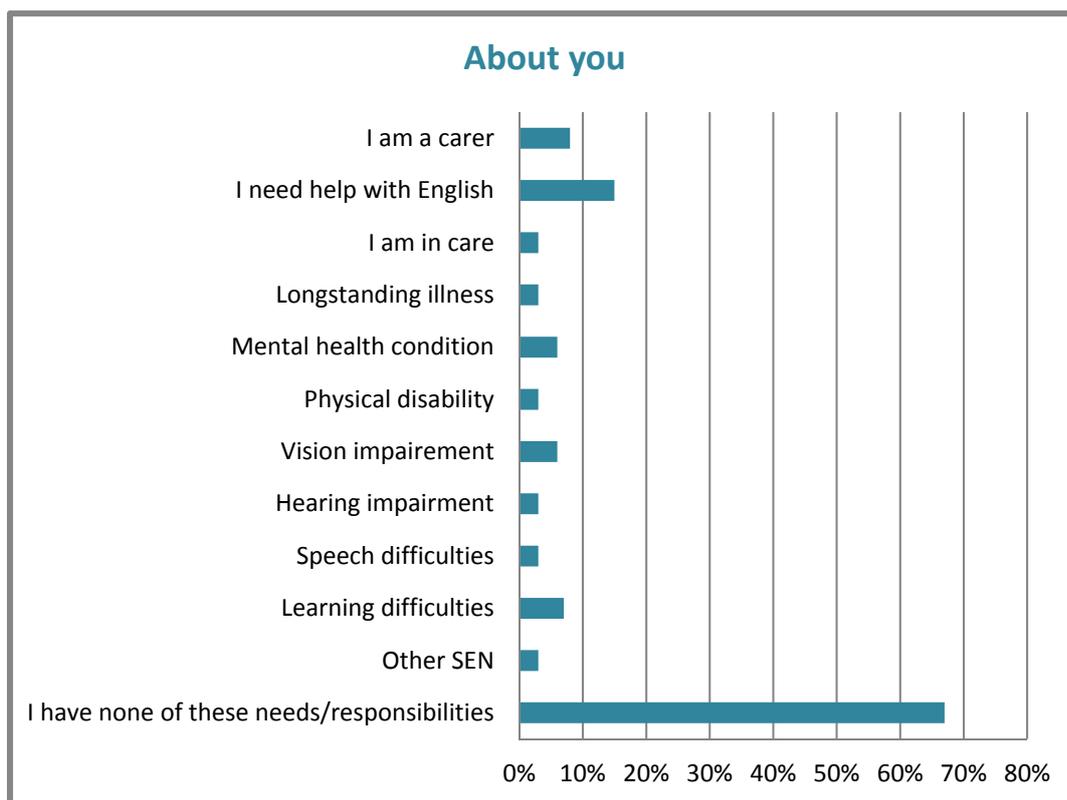
## A diverse sample

We are interested in studying the online lives of young people in different situations in order to obtain relevant information to help those delivering support. This sample includes children and young people who are:

- Young carers
- In care

It also includes children and young people who have

- Learning difficulties
- Mental health difficulties
- A physical disability
- Hearing or vision impairment
- A longstanding illness
- A need for help with English – this could be a communication difficulty or not having English as a first language.



For the third year we have highlighted respondents who experience adversity or vulnerability. This is because our research<sup>1</sup> found that these young people experience high risk situations and harmful experiences online more than their peers. While people who need help with English are not necessarily vulnerable in other ways, it appears that they may need help with their e-safety education or they may not understand the small print of terms and conditions on social media or shopping sites. Our recent analysis suggests that young people with hearing impairments are particularly in need of targeted support to be safe online.

These messages provide valuable insights for frontline practitioners and professionals therefore we are especially grateful to all those schools and staff who facilitated the survey and enabled respondents to take part.

<sup>1</sup> El Asam, A. & Katz, A. A new digital divide? Vulnerable Young People and Online Harm (In preparation).

# Executive Summary

## Access

- The youngest children have far greater access than ever before via tablets.
- Tablets are more popular with younger users than with teens.
- 30% of 10 year olds have a social media page
- Almost all respondents over the age of 14 have a smartphone (96%)
- This year fewer have a tablet for learning provided by their school than last year

Tablets and smartphones deliver ever wider access to the internet for children and young people. This trend is seen among the youngest: 83% of 10-11 year olds have one of these devices they can use and the majority have access to both. In a trend that runs counter to the young people's increasingly digital lives, only 8% say their schools are providing tablets for learning, down from 11% in 2015.

YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram remain the most popular apps, but new climbers include musical.ly and OoVoo. Both of these have had warnings issued about them by online safety experts.

## Changing trends with age

Between the ages of 12 and 15 years the changes are rapid.

- 64% of 11 year olds and 91% of 15 year olds chat online.
- Posting photos or videos rises sharply in one year from 39% of 11 year olds to half of 12 year olds and two thirds of 15's.
- 10% of ten year olds spend five+ hours online in a day. This figure rises threefold by age 15.

These patterns, described in chapter two can be used to determine at which age it would be most worthwhile to deliver certain online safety messages.

## Emotional health

Since 2014 the Cybersurvey has identified young people whose emotional health is associated with their pattern of online behaviour. This year confirms these messages. A little over half of our sample, (53%) feels happy and confident most of the time. 47% say they 'just take life as it comes,' while 41% believe 'I will achieve my goals' most of the time, whereas 6% are depressed.

Young people who feel depressed most of the time describe online lives that differ from their peers. They are:

- Twice as likely to use chatrooms
- Three times as likely to use the internet to 'find new friends or talk to new people'
- More than twice as likely to 'look at pages meant for adults'
- More than twice as likely to spend more than 5+ hours a day online

- More than a third say the internet has 'often caused difficulties with their friends in the past week'
- 18% say it has 'caused difficulties with my family'
- Twice as likely to have met up with someone only known online
- Seven times more likely to say that 'the internet often left me with thoughts and feelings that were upsetting in the last week.'
- They are twice as likely to have been on websites encouraging anorexia
- A third have viewed websites encouraging self-harm or suicide.
- 28% have had their images shared as revenge.

These examples indicate the need to focus on emotional health when helping young people with their online lives.

## Messages for practice

Practice is having an effect: the following items are stabilising or decreasing:

- Cyberbullying, sexting, meeting up
- Homophobia down and stable
- Viewing pro suicide sites stable
- Viewing extremist content stable
- Viewing pro-anorexia sites reduced

Those with mental health difficulties (MHD) were more reliant on the Internet to make friends, some of whom might be in helpful support forums, as one person put it, in '*relatable situations*' whereas others said they find it '*easier to communicate online than in person*'. '*It made me feel like there was someone I could talk to who wouldn't be able to tell anyone I know.*

On a number of measures vulnerable groups appear to be impacted by the Internet or their experiences and encounters on it, in a range of negative ways. This is not proof of cause and effect, but shows the powerful relationship between their internet use and their wellbeing and how their vulnerability needs to be considered alongside their online life if any impact is to be achieved whether in therapy, support or education.

Vulnerable groups include:

- Young carers,
- LAC,
- Those with mental health difficulties, those who are depressed (Emotional Health)
- Those with learning difficulties, hearing loss or other SEN,
- Those who lack confidence or never feel they are 'good enough'.

For example those with hearing loss and those in care, report having their images shared in revenge after a relationship has ended, more than other young people. They are also more prone to experience manipulative online relationships or situations involving sexting.

## Parents' advice on staying safe online

Parents drop away from giving advice and support to their teenagers particularly at age 15 when they are possibly at highest risk online. They also tend to talk to daughters far more than sons and are least likely to give advice to children who prefer not to state their gender. However when they do give advice, it appears to have an impact. Only 58% of ten year olds had been taught to stay safe online by a parent or carer, suggesting parents should be encouraged to begin at a younger age and sustain their support through the teen years. Parents should be encouraged to check games ratings and film or TV content suitability. Only 59% of ten year olds said their parents checked the suitability of online games.

## The majority are doing well in relation to high risk scenarios

While the majority of young people are relatively resilient and safe online, there are those who 'often' encounter these risk scenarios. This should not cloud the picture of the majority who are becoming increasingly confident and digitally skilled. However it does underline the divergence seen in the online lives of those who are highly vulnerable.

The confidence and desire for autonomy among young people which has been a notable feature in earlier reports, is seen again this year. 62% of our respondents said they have often been able to look after themselves online and a further 25% have done so once or twice. This is a fairly young sample. Media headlines would have us believe that all young people are experiencing extremely ugly scenarios online, all the time, but this is not the case in Suffolk. The spike in the number and range of problems seen in 2013/14 is now receding slightly. Sexting, meeting up with someone known only online and Cyberbullying have remained stable at 4%, 14% and 19% respectively. Being persuaded or forced into unwanted sexual activity has reduced in the past two years from a high in 2014. Online racism is more prevalent than homophobia which has fallen.

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

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

## Meeting up with someone known only online

14% of our 12-16+ year olds have met up in real life with someone they met online. Despite the phrasing of this question focusing on people only known online, it is clear that many young people are meeting someone they knew of, or knew through someone else. They take it another step via the Internet and 'hook up'. However the widespread acceptance of this way of meeting new people can make young people less alert to the possible risks inherent in it. For most of them it is only another form of communication. This could lull them into a false sense that it is entirely safe. Vulnerable groups were more likely to travel far and meet up with someone not in their age group.

### The person they met was about the same age as they are:

12 year olds - in 81% of cases;	15 year olds – in 80% of cases
13 year olds – in 87% of cases;	16 year olds - 85% of case
14 year olds – in 85% of cases;	16+ - in 92% of cases

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has not increased but a third of people who report it say this does not result in a good outcome or getting it to stop. On the contrary, it stays the same or even worsens as a result. Responses and interventions need to improve via training and joined up multi-agency responses where necessary. The peak age for cyberbullying this year is 16 years. This illustrates the need to continue with good relationships education alongside digital literacy until the end of year 10.

## Online safety education

Schools in Suffolk are delivering online safety education to fewer young people than four years ago: 80% vs 93%.

Over the nine years of the Cybersurvey young people often talk approvingly about the e-safety education and then go on to say they seldom if ever follow it. This has been a consistent message in all areas and in each year, although the figures for adherence have been slowly improving over time, in 2016 in Suffolk we find that:

- 57% always follow it in contrast to 61% last year
- 30% sometimes follow it
- 6% say they don't really follow it
- 3% never do

Those who prefer not to state their gender are least likely to always follow the advice. They also report low levels of e-safety education.