

Connected children: vulnerable users or digital experts?

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the case for improved policy, law and action to protect children.

At different times and
even at the same time
they can be both



Bailey Gwynne was 16 when this picture was taken

He was stabbed and killed in his school playground by another 16 year old boy who bought a 8.5 cm knife for £40 from Amazon

It is illegal to sell knives like this to persons under the age of 18. Amazon delivered it to the killer's home. He left a note on his door asking the driver to leave it for him because he had to go out.

A few months later "The Guardian" got Amazon to deliver knives in the same way

Many other examples: alcohol, cigarettes, gambling and pornography

To deal with problem gambling among minors the UK had to pass the Gambling Act, 2005. The great majority of gambling web sites did nothing until the law changed.

So these *may* be very digitally smart, connected kids but the real world protections developed over decades to protect them from different types of impulsive or ill-advised behaviour in many areas have not found a counterpart in the online space.



Ofcom report on internet safety measures

Strategies of parental protection for children online

Online habits of British 12 – 15 year olds

| | Delete "history" | Go into privacy mode | Unset filters or controls | Use a proxy server |
|-----------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Know how | 2014: 33% | 2014: 22% | 2014: 11% | - |
| Have done | 2014: 12% | 2014: 6% | 2014: 3% | - |
| Know how | 2015: 34% | 2015: 24% | 2015: 10% | 6% |
| Have done | 2015: 11% | 2016: 6% | 2015: 1% | 1% |

The growth of e-commerce

By 2019 the web will account for 12.4% of global retail sales.
By 2021 e-commerce will be around US\$3.5 trillion

2014 study - 76% teenage girls in USA and 86% teenage boys shopped online

Amazon, eBay and Netflix among the top 3

Like the UK's gambling sites these are not small or poor businesses.

In 2006 UK people up to 19 years of age spent £12 billion of their own money

Spending decisions where children and young people have some influence exceed £100 billion. Businesses target them in many different ways. This is not just about building long term relationships. It is about collecting cash now!

Critical understanding of search engines One in five 12-15s who use search engines believe that if a search engine lists information it must be true. 7.10 Children aged 12-15 who ever use search engines (88% of all who go online at home or elsewhere) were asked about the truthfulness of information that was returned by the search engine. Children were asked to say which of the following statements was closer to their opinion:

- “I think that if they have been listed by the search engine the information on the website must be truthful.”
- “I think that some of the websites in the list will show truthful information and some will show untruthful information.”
- “I don’t really think about whether or not they have truthful information, I just use the sites I like the look of.”

Young people's critical faculties?

Children's levels of critical awareness – **about advertising messages**, about how services are funded (and therefore whether they are being sold to) and about the extent to which they can trust information – are relatively low.

Set alongside the wider range of sources of content children have access to, their increased exposure to advertising and the use of services like social networking raises challenges for how parents help children keep their personal information safe, understand the implications of sharing personal information and content and navigate the increasingly complex online environment safely in a way which will allow them to get the benefits and minimise the risks.

Children are more likely than in 2014 to think that information on websites or apps used for school work and on social media sites is “always true”

Children aged 8-15 who go online at home or elsewhere were asked whether they visited various types of websites or apps. Those who visited each type were then asked whether they thought all the information on these sites or apps is true, most of it is true or some of it is true. 7.5 The majority of 8-11s and 12-15s who go online say they visit websites or apps for schoolwork/homework. Of those who do so, 28% of 8-11s and 17% of 12-15s believe that all the information shown is true. Compared to 2014, 8-11s in 2015 are more likely to believe that all the information they see on these sites/ apps is true. 7.6 More than half of 8-11s (53%) and nine in ten 12-15s (89%) who go online say they have visited social media sites or apps (like Facebook, Google Plus, Snapchat Twitter, Tumblr, WhatsApp or YouTube). While the majority say that only ‘most’ or ‘some of’ the information on social media sites is true, a small proportion in each age group believe that all the information on social media sites and apps is true (8% for 8- 11s and 9% for 12-15s). This is an increase since 2014 for 12-15s.

