DIGITAL LIVES

HOW DO TEENAGERS IN THE UK NAVIGATE THEIR DIGITAL WORLD?

Contents

Executive summary

Digital Lives provides insight into how teenagers in the UK navigate the ever-evolving digital world and respond to the cultural norms that are emerging from it. Commissioned by Google and Vodafone, this qualitative study seeks to complement existing research, such as the extensive work carried out by EU Kids Online and Ofcom.

As teenagers' real lives and digital lives converge, it is crucial that the opportunities, challenges and risks they face are fully understood and that key stakeholders, including government, industry and schools, continue to provide guidance and support.

Shaped by a panel of parenting, technology and health experts and implemented by Bold Creative, Digital Lives focuses on the experiences of 72 young people aged 13 to 18 across the UK. The study was conducted between March and July 2013 using a combination of online and offline questionnaires and a series of workshops.

The objectives included:

- Investigate how teenagers use digital media and devices
- Find out what they consider to be the positives and negatives of their digital world
- Examine how they respond to education campaigns
- Provide qualitative evidence to help Google, Vodafone and other interested stakeholders shape initiatives in this important area

In addition to this report, a number of videos made during the workshops and further quotes from the participants are available at lives.boldcreative.co.uk

Which social networks and other digital services do young people use?

The Digital Lives study confirms that teenagers lead varied and active digital lives. Many have been online from a young age and have already had more than one mobile phone. The participants acknowledge that their move from primary to secondary school was a key milestone in their technology use as they turned to Facebook, Twitter and messaging services for the first time to communicate with friends. Now, however, many older teenagers appear to be growing out of 'traditional' social networking sites, preferring services like Instagram and Snapchat.

How are young people interacting with social networks and other digital services and what kind of challenges arise as a result?

Digital technologies offer young people numerous opportunities and benefits. But many of the issues and concerns they experience offline also exist in the digital world. The Digital Lives questionnaire and workshops sought to drill down into how teenagers behave online, especially when they face risky situations or have to make complex decisions. Six key challenges were identified, which take into account the vital roles played by parents, professionals who work with teenagers, representatives of the digital industry and young people themselves.

Challenge #1: How can young people be discouraged from bowing to peer pressure or pushing digital boundaries in order to boost popularity?

From how many 'likes' they get on their social networking profile to being persuaded to take part in a provocative 'challenge video', teenagers' social anxieties are amplified online. Young people might choose to take a risk in order to get attention or validation or to boost popularity and, in some cases, their peers might put pressure on them to behave in a certain way. While taking risks - either online or offline - is often acknowledged as an important part of growing up, teenagers might not fully consider the consequences of their actions. For example, sharing sexual images (commonly known as sexting) could damage their reputation and alienate them from their peers. Parents, teachers and other influencers play a key role in helping young people to understand why it is important to create and respect boundaries, many of which cross over between online and offline (e.g. it is not advisable to take part in a dare that could hurt you or get you into trouble).

Challenge #2: How can young people be helped to cope with negative or abusive comments online and also understand the impact of their words on others?

The Digital Lives participants chose to touch upon the issue of bullying only briefly during the study when they discussed 'hate'* on certain social networks. This could be because they do not view all online gossip and negative remarks as bullying or harassment (in the way that an adult might) - research in the US has revealed that teenagers sometimes refer to it as 'drama', for example[1]. Although some young people appear to have developed their own techniques for dealing with negative or abusive comments, such as laughing them off, they acknowledge that bullying can be harmful and it appears that they still need advice and support from adults.
The term 'hate' was used by some of the participants to describe negative or abusive comments they have received online.

Challenge #3: How can younger children be protected in the digital world and older teenagers be empowered to help their younger peers?

Pornography, animal cruelty and violent behaviour are the main examples of inappropriate content that the teenagers involved in the study have come across on the internet, whether accidentally or on purpose. Interestingly, their main concern was that younger children - especially siblings and fellow students - would come across inappropriate content (such as pornography), think it was normal and develop a distorted view of the world as a result. There appears to be a strong sense of responsibility among young people and a desire to pass on digital knowledge and wisdom to help protect other children.

Challenge #4: How can freedom of expression be promoted to young people at the same time as the 'think before you post' message?

Although the internet has become a key medium for young people to express themselves, they acknowledge that it has its limitations. Online comments can be misinterpreted because elements such as irony are lost in translation. Parents in particular appear to be a difficult audience to please and some of the Digital Lives participants admitted to having an 'official' Facebook account to which their family has access and another one that they use more freely. For teenagers, the 'think before you post' mantra remains relevant so that they can protect their digital reputation and not offend or upset other people.

Challenge #5: How can young people be encouraged to strike the right balance between the time they spend online and offline and allow their friends to do the same?

Between messaging, watching videos, searching and social networking, teenagers have little time to take a break from the digital world. As a result, they sometimes let technology encroach on offline activities, such as school, socialising and sleeping. Some admit that the immediacy of the digital world

1. 'The Drama! Teen Conflict, Gossip, and Bullying in Networked Publics', Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd, September 2011
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1926349

can be stressful and frustrating at times. It is therefore crucial that they are helped to strike the right balance and take regular digital time-outs - and be encouraged to let their friends do the same.

Challenge #6: How can young people be encouraged to keep their passwords to themselves and be helped to deal with their social network being hacked?
For some teenagers, the internet is even more public than it should be. Although young people acknowledge the importance of keeping log-in details to themselves, they might be expected to give them to their boyfriends or girlfriends (as a sign of intimacy or trust) or their parents (to help them stay safe). Sharing this kind of information can be risky - an ex who still has the password might post something malicious, for example - and it is evident that young people still need guidance when it comes to their digital security and privacy.

What kind of education campaigns appeal to young people?

As part of the Digital Lives project young people were asked how best to reach them with educational messages that would get their attention and bring about a change in their behaviour.

The participants were shown a selection of recent campaigns aimed at 8 to 15-year-olds - including ones by Nickelodeon, CEOP, End Violence Against Women and the Metropolitan Police - and asked for their reactions in terms of format, messages and effectiveness.

Covering topics such as bullying, internet safety and violence against women, the workshops revealed that teenagers respond well to animation featuring audio testimony by real people as it makes them think differently. They also like being given different outcome options because it engages them and they wonder what the conclusion might be. Humour is also important - young people like to make their friends laugh and humourous campaigns encourage them to share materials with their peers. Finally, authenticity is crucial. Teenagers will simply switch off is something is condescending, slow-paced or too 'educational'.

The Digital Lives participants also commented that schools are the best place to introduce communications on these kind of topics. They favour stealth learning and viral campaigns, commenting that leading with shock tactics or comedy and then subtly introducing learning points and other resources works well. It is clear from the workshops that young people enjoy talking about their digital lives, so a dialogue-based approach could work well. In addition, teenagers would like to draw on their own experiences to teach adults and younger children about any risks they might face and how to deal with them - peer-to-peer mentoring would be a popular option.

What digital advice would teenagers give younger children?

Having already established how older teenagers want to protect younger children when it comes to the digital world, the participants were asked what kind of advice they would give them. Their tips acknowledged that, while risky behaviour does take place, negative consequences can be minimised. The teenagers' advice included: 'Ask friends and family for their consent before posting things they are in', 'Don't get involved in other people's arguments - stick to your own business' and 'Avoid posting anything that might undermine you or your credibility later in life'. There was a strong feeling among the workshop participants that peer-to-peer advice about digital issues is very useful - older teens can draw on their own personal experiences and pass on their knowledge to younger teens, for example.

Summary of conclusion

Digital Lives provides further evidence that teenagers' lives are increasingly played out on digital platforms and that social networks are at the core of this. It also recognises that there is a downside to the digital world, with risk-taking behaviours having similar negative consequences to those demonstrated offline.

Teenagers taking risks is nothing new, of course, and academics acknowledge that it is an important part of growing up and that risk is not inevitably harmful as long as young people understand how to build resilience and develop coping strategies [2].

In many ways, life in the digital world mirrors the rest of their life and the challenges and risks that young people face online tend to be the same as those they deal with offline. There are some crucial differences, especially as young people's lives are being played out in front of hundreds of people online and they are sometimes left to their own devices because their parents or teachers might not know what advice to give.

With this in mind, industry and other stakeholders should continue to play an important role in engaging and supporting young people, parents, teachers and other influencers through tailored education campaigns that bring about behavioural change. These findings will inform existing initiatives, such as Google's Good to Know (www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow) and Vodafone's Digital Parenting (www.vodafone.com/parents). Google and Vodafone have also commited to integrating the key findings from Digital Lives in new projects aimed at young people and their families, some of which - such as Well Versed (www.wellversed.co.uk) - are already under way.

2. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/1/EU%20Kids%20Online%20national%20perspectives%20%28lsero%29.pdf

Introduction

We all know that the digital world never stands still. Often described as 'digital natives', young people in particular are embracing the constant stream of new apps, devices, games, services and websites.

For many teenagers in the UK, online and offline are now woven together. And, with the emergence of smartphones and tablets, the majority have the internet 'in their pocket' 24/7. According to Ofcom, more than 60 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds have a smartphone and around a quarter have their own tablet [3].

As Mary Madden of the Pew Research Center's Internet Project puts it, "The nature of teens' internet use has transformed dramatically - from stationary connections tied to shared desktops in the home to always-on connections that move with them throughout the day. In many ways, teens represent the leading edge of mobile connectivity, and the patterns of their technology use often signal future changes in the adult population." [4]

The advantages of digital technologies and their impact on young people's lives are well-documented - from the role the internet plays in education, entertainment and communication [5] to the positive impact of social media on teenagers' confidence and friendships [6].

The potential challenges and risks that young people face in the digital world also feature in numerous studies. For example, a fifth of 12 to 15-year-olds in the UK say they have seen something on the internet that is worrying, nasty or offensive [7] and, while bullying 'in the playground' remains a problem, more than half of children and young people say that online bullying is part of everyday life too [8].

Against this backdrop, the technology industry has an important role to play in helping young people to manage their digital lives. Google and Vodafone already have successful initiatives in place - Google's Good to Know website (www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow) provides advice about staying safe and secure online and Vodafone's Digital Parenting magazine and website (www.vodafone.com/parents) help parents get more involved in their child's digital world.

Industry must continue to be informed about how children and teenagers use technology and what their concerns are. As well as staying abreast of in-depth research by organisations such as EU Kids Online and Ofcom, it is important to hear young people's experiences first-hand. For that reason, Google and Vodafone commissioned a qualitative study of teenagers across the UK in 2013, called Digital Lives.

3. 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, October 2013
http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/october-2013/research07Oct2013.pdf
4. 'Teens and Technology 2013', Pew Research Center Internet Project, March 2013
http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2013/Teens-and-Technology-2013.aspx
5. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/1/EU%20Kids%20Online%20national%20perspectives%20%28Isero%29.pdf
6. 'Social media, social life: How teens view their digital lives', Common Sense Media, June 2012
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-how-teens-view-their-digital-lives
7. 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, October 2013
http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/october-2013/research07Oct2013.pdf
8. 'New survey finds parents and teachers struggle to keep kids safe online', Anti-Bullying Alliance and Slater and Gordon, October 2013
http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/press-centre/new-survey-finds-parents-and-teachers-struggle-to-keep-kids-safe-online.aspx

Six experts from the technology, parenting and health arenas were invited to help steer the Digital Lives insight project and Bold Creative was commissioned to design and implement it.
The goal? To explore young people's perceptions of the internet, smartphones and other digital technologies in an informal workshop environment in order to guide the work of Google, Vodafone and other stakeholders in this important area.

Acknowledging the breadth of existing research on this subject, the workshops drilled down into specific digital behaviours, such as 'rating' online friends, sharing passwords and reactions to shock content, violence, pornography and other content considered to be risky or unsafe for young people. Although guided by the facilitator, the participants were given the freedom to talk about what is important to them, which resulted in diverse discussions across the workshops.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate how young people use digital media and devices
- Find out what they consider to be the positives and negatives of their digital world
- Identify any gaps in their knowledge and the support they receive in this area
- Capture the kind of digital advice that teenagers would give to younger children
- Gauge young people's views on the most effective way to give them information and engage them (e.g. educational campaigns)
- Provide qualitative evidence that will inform Google, Vodafone and other stakeholders and help them to shape their initiatives that are aimed at a youth audience

72 young people aged 13 to 18 in four diverse groups across England (in Berkshire, Leicester, London and Oxford) took part in the research between March and July 2013.

The methodology included:

- Administering two questionnaires (one offline and one online) to map the participants' digital usage patterns
- Holding 12 two-hour qualitative research sessions (i.e. three workshops with each of the four groups of young people)
- Working with the advisory board to determine initial hypotheses, validate research strategies, receive ethical guidance and get feedback on ideas and recommendations
- Capturing key findings in a project blog, short insight video and this report

Representatives of Google and Vodafone were joined by the following experts who served on the Digital Lives advisory board:

- Dr Richard Graham of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
- Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE of the London School of Economics and EU Kids Online
- Marketa Mach, former CEO of Go ON UK
- Mary MacLeod OBE, founding Chief Executive of the Family and Parenting Institute
- Dr Linda Papadopoulos, research scientist and practising psychologist
- Vicki Shotbolt, Founder and CEO of The Parent Zone

In addition to this report, a number of videos made during the workshops and further quotes from the participants are available at lives.boldcreative.co.uk

Findings

Following the Digital Lives workshops, Google, Vodafone, Bold Creative and the advisory board worked together to identify key themes across the questionnaire and workshop data. The findings were grouped into the following four sections:

A. Which social networks and other digital services do young people use?

B. How are young people interacting with social networks and other digital services and what kind of challenges arise as a result?

C. What kind of education campaigns appeal to young people?

D. What digital advice would teenagers give younger children?

Please note, the phrases 'young people' and 'teenagers' are used as umbrella terms throughout this report. When it is deemed necessary to break the participants' comments down further, 'older teens' refers to 15 to 18-year-olds and 'younger teens' refers to 11 to 14-year-olds.

A: Which social networks and other digital services do young people use?

Teenagers are spoilt for choice when it comes to the digital world. Tablets and smartphones are becoming must-have devices[9] for many, Facebook remains popular (although, the company admitted in 2013 that it was seeing a decrease in daily users among younger teens[10]) and newer entrants like Snapchat are growing fast, with around 400 million photos or video messages (called 'snaps') sent every day[11].

Key findings from this part of the Digital Lives study include:

- Most of the teenagers interviewed agree that using the internet is a positive aspect of their lives

- Around a fifth of participants had their own internet access before they turned eight and many of the older teens have already had three or more mobile phones

- The move from primary to secondary school was the tipping point for the participants' first use of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and messaging services like BBM and WhatsApp

- Facebook usage appears to decrease as teens get older and grow out of certain behaviours like 'rating' people online and as they see parents and other family members come into what was previously their exclusive space

- While a separate study reveals that one in four 9 to 16-year-olds in the UK use Twitter more than their other social networking profiles[12], for many older teens who took part in the Digital Lives project, Twitter appears to have lost favour although following celebrities' tweets remains popular

- Instagram has captured the interest of older teens in particular - many of the workshop participants aged 15+ said that the photo-sharing app is their favourite social network, ahead of Facebook and Twitter

- Snapchat is popular with many of the 13 to 18-year-olds interviewed

- Those who cited Tumblr like it because it allows them to anonymously reach out to support networks in niche interest areas

- Social networks and messaging services seem to fall into two categories - some remain popular and stay around for a long time (e.g. Facebook) while others are more of a short-lived fad

- When it comes to online friends, there is no strict selection criteria. Young people consider connecting with people online who they don't know to be normal behaviour. Furthermore, they often have online friendships with people they say they "don't like" - perhaps because they are 'keeping their enemies close' or because it is difficult to decline a friend request

- Young people would like to be able to discuss their digital lives more with their teachers and parents although separate research shows that few talk to teachers about problems they have online[13]

9. 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, October 2013
http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/october-2013/research07Oct2013.pdf
10. Techcrunch, 30 October 2013
http://techcrunch.com/2013/10/30/facebook-teens-drop/
11. CNET, 19 November 2013
http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57612943-93/snapchat-surpasses-facebook-in-photo-uploads/
12. 'Net Children Go Mobile: risks and opportunities', February 2014
http://www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/
13. 'Risks and safety on the internet: the perspective of European children', EU Kids Online, August 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/1/Risks%20and%20safety%20on%20the%20internet%28lsero%29.pdf

B: How are young people interacting with social networks and other digital services and what kind of challenges arise as a result?

The teenage years are often fun but they also present some difficulties and challenges. Hormones are raging, exams are looming, friendships and family relationships can seem complicated and there is a constant pressure to be liked and popular. On top of that, young people are now growing up very publicly, in front of an audience of hundreds - or even thousands - on social networks and other digital services.

With this in mind, the Digital Lives questionnaire and workshops sought to answer various questions, including: Do teenagers behave differently online to the way they act offline? What kind of risks are they taking online? Do they need guidance and support in any particular areas?

Six key challenges were identified as a result of the study and are outlined below. They take into account the vital roles played by parents, professionals who work with teenagers, representatives of the digital industry and young people themselves. These digital challenges, such as building popularity and becoming sexually-aware, mirror many of those that teenagers experience offline.

Challenge #1: How can young people be discouraged from bowing to peer pressure or pushing digital boundaries in order to boost popularity?

For most of the teenagers who participated in the Digital Lives study, peer acceptance is crucial. In the same way that they might wear certain clothes or follow a particular band so that they fit in, they might exhibit certain behaviours online to get attention or validation from their friends and other people.

Sharing photos and videos on social networks plays a big part in this but it brings both highs and lows. As Common Sense Media acknowledges, posting photos online "...can be particularly fun and particularly nerve-wracking for teens... Am I attractive enough? Am I with the right people? Do I seem popular? Is somebody else going to post an awful photo of me?"[14]

The Digital Lives participants explained that 'like for a rate' and other rating activities are commonplace on social networks like Facebook. A young person might publish a piece of content, such as a self-portrait (selfie), and ask their friends to 'like' it in return for a rating out of 10 or 100 on their timeline. As the 'like' or rating is often based on looks, popularity or reputation, it can amplify social anxieties that already exist in the playground. With research showing that around a fifth of 13 to 17-year-olds feel bad if they don't get a lot of 'likes' for a photo[15], crowdsourcing popularity in this way can be tough.

> *"On Facebook, you can do a 'like for a like'. If you're popular, you could have 80 to 90 - sometimes up to 200 - likes for one status but if you're not popular, you could get two or three. It depends on how popular you are and you can tell that by Facebook."*
> **Girl, 14, Oxford**

Furthermore, in the increasingly competitive digital world, young people are being 'brave' or 'provocative' online and pushing boundaries to get themselves noticed. Some of the workshop participants admitted that they take risks online in order to make an impression and establish their social status.

Sharing sexual photos of themselves - often called sexting - is one such risky behaviour that can have negative consequences. Although it is difficult to determine the true scale of the issue, a 2012 study by the NSPCC revealed that between 15% and 40% of young people in the UK could be taking part in

sexting and that girls in particular are being coerced by their peers into posting such images[16]. The NSPCC and ChildLine are helping to educate young people that it is OK to say no to sharing these kind of images.

Another example of peer pressure that came up in the workshops was 'challenge videos', where teenagers dare each other to be filmed doing something funny, impressive or shocking that will grab people's attention. In order to stand out and get the clip to go viral, the video creators often break taboos by filming sexual, violent or outrageous acts. Some of the Digital Lives participants mentioned one case where a video caused such a widespread negative reaction that the girl who had made it apparently moved schools afterwards.

The study also suggests that some young people seek attention and self-validation online from people they do not know because they are not getting it from their friends or family. According to some of the Digital Lives participants, social networks that anyone can join anonymously (rather than having to sign up as a member) are popular platforms for this reason.

> *"If the people around you don't support you and make you feel sexy and beautiful or whatever, then you seek it from other people and that's why you go online."*
> **Boy, 17, London**

There was a general consensus among the workshop participants that taking risks - both online and offline - is not necessarily a bad thing. It is simply part of growing up. The teenagers did, however, agree that the consequences could be profound and that they are often not considered well enough in advance. They also pointed out that the tricky transition phase between primary and secondary school is a turning point in risk-taking behaviour as there is so much focus on being accepted into your new environment and liked by your new peers.

> *"The first couple of years in secondary school, that's when you're most vulnerable because that's when..it's like "yes, I'm grown up!" and you go mad with it and that's when you're at your most risky...you get 'disliked' so quickly - you could be the most popular kid in the school and you do one wrong move and you're back with the people in the corner."*
> **Boy, 17, Oxford**

Ironically, the workshops revealed that taking digital risks in order to get people's attention and build social status often has the opposite effect, with young people losing friends and being ostracised by their peers. According to the participants, sharing sexually explicit images can result in girls being branded 'sluts', user-generated 'challenge videos' might lead to ridicule and anonymous social networks often attract hate comments.

The desire to be popular (and the peer pressure associated with it) is by no means a digital phenomenon; it has been part of teenagers' lives for years. But the digital world has certainly created new ways of gaining popularity and for parents, teachers and other influencers, the message is clear: young people need guidance and support about this, just as they do offline.

14. 'Social media, social life: How teens view their digital lives', Common Sense Media, June 2012
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-how-teens-view-their-digital-lives
15. 'Social media, social life: How teens view their digital lives', Common Sense Media, June 2012
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-how-teens-view-their-digital-lives
16. 'A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting", NSPCC, May 2012
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research_wda89260.html

Challenge #2: How can young people be helped to cope with negative or abusive comments online and also understand the impact of their words on others?

The topic of bullying only came up briefly during the Digital Lives workshops - perhaps because young people do not always define it in the same way as adults and are more inured to and tolerant of certain digital behaviours.

Some of the participants talked about 'hate' comments on open social networks, where young people can interact anonymously with strangers and peers (unlike closed social networks that require membership in order to invite and accept people as 'friends').

As Amy Binns of the University of Central Lancashire says, "Although anonymous abuse has always taken place in schools, for example by leaving notes in lockers or writing on toilet walls, I posit that the easy, risk-free nature of these platforms is likely to tempt a larger number of people to misbehave because their own behaviour feels less real."[17]

> *"...it's like the worst hate ever...literally stuff that they've thought of off the top of their head that might not even be true...people you don't even know can just message you..."*
> **Girl, 17, Leicester**

While almost half of children and young people in the UK say they have been bullied at school at some point [18], research by the Anti-Bullying Alliance reveals that nearly one in five have experienced mean or cruel behaviour online. The same study also suggests that many young people do not understand what constitutes bullying, with 15% saying that if someone was upset by a mean comment they had directed at them online, they would think they were over-reacting.[19]

Whether made online or offline, by an anonymous stranger or a supposed friend, negative and abusive comments can affect a young person's self-esteem and make them feel isolated. Whilst some of the workshop participants demonstrated resilience and coping techniques, such as using humour to deflect negative remarks, they acknowledged that online bullying can be harmful to teenagers.

It is interesting to note that the issue of bullying was an isolated discussion during the Digital Lives workshops. One explanation could be that young people and adults no longer define bullying in the same way - research in the US has revealed that teenagers sometimes play it down, referring to it as 'drama', for example[20]. The Digital Lives participants' references to negative or abusive comments, which they called 'hate', confirm that young people still need help to cope with online harassment as well as to understand the impact of their words on others.

Challenge #3: How can younger children be protected in the digital world and older teens be empowered to help their younger peers?

The workshops revealed the types of inappropriate content that teenagers come across on the internet - pornography, animal cruelty and violent behaviour were the most common among the participants. Sometimes, this kind of content has come up because they have searched for it but, at other times, it has simply appeared in their social network news feeds.

Some of the young people who took part in the Digital Lives study, especially boys, said they find adult content humorous and often harmless. Most of the participants said they know how to ignore this kind of content and can forget about it quite quickly. Some, however, talked about certain photos

and video clips staying imprinted on their minds - experts acknowledge that seeing these kind of images could have a traumatic impact on them

"Say one of your friends comments on a video that's public, it'll come up on your news feed - so you're just scrolling through and it'll come up with this animal-inappropriate thing... and it'll actually make me feel physically sick."
Girl, 17, London

A common thread across the workshops was that teenagers often encounter advertising for adult content, especially when they use download and streaming sites (some of which are not legal) to access films and music. Examples included pop-up banners prompting viewers to 'find sex in your area' and an interactive game to 'cut the bra', which linked to an adult store.

These kind of adverts add to the 'wallpaper of sexualisation'[21] that surrounds young people and puts pressure on them to grow up too quickly. According to EU Kids Online, almost a quarter of 9 to 16-year-olds in the UK say that they have seen sexual images such as nudity and people having sex, either online or offline[22].

17. 'Facebook's Ugly Sisters: Anonymity and Abuse on Ask.fm and Formspring.me, University of Central Lancashire, August 2013
http://www.academia.edu/4298024/Facebooks_Ugly_Sisters_Anonymity_and_Abuse_on_Ask.fm_and_Formspring.me
18. Tellus4 National Report, March 2010
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221932/DCSF-RR218.pdf
19. 'Cyberbullying concerns: only one in ten parents think that their child is safe online', Anti-Bullying Alliance and McAfee, November 2013
http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/press-centre/cyber-bullying-concerns-only-one-in-ten-parents-think-that-their-child-is-safe-online.aspx
20. 'The Drama! Teen Conflict, Gossip, and Bullying in Networked Publics', Alice E. Marwick and danah boyd, September 2011
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1926349
21. 'Letting Children be Children', Department for Education, June 2011
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letting-children-be-children-report-of-an-independent-review-of-the-commercialisation-and-sexualisation-of-childhood
22. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/1/EU%20Kids%20Online%20national%20perspectives%20%28lsero%29.pdf

Many of the older teenagers in the Digital Lives study are concerned about the effect this kind of content has on younger children as it could give them a distorted view of the world. Younger teens do not seem equipped to put these kind of images in perspective - what they see as normal behaviour in a video online could actually be inappropriate, extreme or even illegal, for example. Older teens worry how naive students in the first year of secondary school can be and think that younger teens might take more risks online. They talked about wanting to help them and many of those with younger siblings commented that they have stepped in to protect their brother or sister at some point.

"My brother was on some bad sites. Even though we told him not to go on them, he still would. He had a lot of freedom. My other brother sat him down and told him why he shouldn't do it. We're not idiots, we just sometimes need to have someone explain why."
Girl, 17, London

For many of the Digital Lives participants, inappropriate content, such as sexual images, is regarded as harmful because it gives young people a skewed perspective of adult behaviour and could result in negative changes in their own values and attitude both offline and online.

These pockets of knowledge and the sense of responsibility that older teens have towards younger children when it comes to the digital world are worth noting. There appears to be a very strong desire among the participants to pass on their digital wisdom - perhaps through peer-to-peer mentoring in schools - so that other children do not make the same mistakes.

Challenge #4: How can freedom of expression be promoted to young people at the same time as the 'think before you post' message?

The internet has become a key medium for self-expression and teenagers are no exception. Many of the workshop participants acknowledged, however, that there are limits to free speech and self-expression online - when you hit 'publish' or 'share' on a comment or status update, you know what it means to you but it could be misinterpreted by or offend others. Even if the person posting the message does it entirely innocently, people often 'get the wrong end of the stick' and this can result in arguments and confrontations.

Some of the participants admitted that they feel more able to voice their opinions and feelings online than in face-to-face situations. This reflects the findings of a separate UK study, in which more than half of 11 to 16-year-old internet users said they find it easier to be themselves online.[23]

It is clear that not being face-to-face to see and hear how something is said can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. With comments on social networks and other text-based communications, elements like irony are lost, for example.

"Sarcasm doesn't come across the same online as it does in person."
Boy, 17, Oxford

When online posts are misunderstood, the workshop participants commented that arguments can quickly escalate, both online and offline. Even if the person who made the post did not mean to cause offence or upset anyone (e.g. if they post a status update about someone else that is meant to be a joke), the consequences can be far-reaching.

23. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/1/EU%20Kids%20Online%20national%20perspectives%20%28lsero%29.pdf

It is not only an individual's own posts that can cause problems, young people also need to be mindful when sharing other people's status updates and comments. This is particularly true when it comes to sharing content that could be considered sexist, racist, homophobic or offensive in any other way.

"My family ring my mum, like if I put a status update, they'll call her and say 'What's this about? Blah, blah, blah' and I can't be bothered with the hassle...I put a song lyric [on Facebook] and my dad was like 'Why has she put this on?' to my mum and my mum came running in and was like 'What are you doing? and I was like 'It's a song!' and then I had to prove it was a song because she didn't believe me."
Girl, 17, Leicester

Teenagers find it frustrating that they are unable to express themselves openly online because it might get them into trouble with their family and friends. There appears to be a particular disconnect when it comes to parents and some of the workshop participants commented that they have secondary Facebook accounts on which they can post more freely, away from their parents' watchful eyes.

The internet is a test bed for adults as well as teenagers; a place where we can express ourselves in ways we might not in our offline world. For young people, in particular, there is a tension between wanting to express themselves right now and worrying about their long-term reputation. So, the challenge remains: how can we encourage the 'think before you post' mantra to help them protect their digital reputation and avoid offending or upsetting other people?

Challenge #5: How can young people be encouraged to strike the right balance between the time they spend online and offline and allow their friends to do the same?

With the average 13 to 17-year-old owning six digital devices[24], young people with smartphones sending more than 180 messages a week[25] and the typical teenage Facebook user having around 300 friends[26], do they ever get the chance to take a digital time-out?

Although young people love the fact that technology means they can now stay in touch with anyone, anywhere and at any time, some admit that social media and digital communications can overwhelm them. The immediacy of the digital world, in particular, can make teenagers feel stressed, frustrated and under pressure to respond to messages straight away.

"[Communication] is too open, too direct. If you're on iMessage or Facebook, it tells you if someone's read your message and it's like 'Don't look at me and then not reply'. I hate it!"
Boy, 17, Oxford

Furthermore, the internet and their mobile frequently distracts them from other activities - the majority of Digital Lives participants confessed to posting and messaging during lessons at school, when they are out socialising and when they should be sleeping.

Many of the teenagers who took part in the study commented that they would like to have more control over their online availability and more respect from others when it comes to their personal offline space. Similarly, a study by MTV revealed that eight in 10 teenagers aged 13 to 17 sometimes 'just need to unplug and enjoy the simple things'.[27]

Striking the right balance between online and offline activities is a challenge for many young people. As digital devices become more widely available and they are more engaged with apps, games and

other content, they are spending increasing amounts of time in their digital spaces. While they gain from this in many ways, it is also having a negative impact, making them feel stressed and distracted. It is therefore crucial that they are reminded of the importance of having regular digital time-outs so that they can take part in other activities - and that they let their friends do the same.

Challenge #6: How can young people be encouraged to keep their passwords to themselves and be helped to deal with their social network being hacked?

Social networks have become communications and friendship hubs for many young people - places where they freely share personal information, photos and opinions, often without considering the consequences of living their digital lives so publicly. One of the risks they face is other people maliciously accessing their social networks (often referred to as being hacked).

Some of the Digital Lives participants explained that they are expected to share their online passwords with certain people, including parents, friends, boyfriends and girlfriends. Parents request login details as a compromise for allowing their son or daughter to sign up to a particular social network and to help them stay safe whilst, for boyfriends and girlfriends, exchanging passwords appears to be an issue of trust and intimacy.

> *"[By not sharing your password], your [girlfriend] might think you're trying to hide something, like messages from another girl."*
> **Boy, 16, Berkshire**

This is not unusual - indeed, research in the US shows that around one in three teens share their passwords with people close to them[28]. As Matt Richtel wrote in the New York Times, "It has become fashionable for young people to express their affection for each other by sharing their passwords to email, Facebook and other accounts. Boyfriends and girlfriends sometimes even create identical passwords, and let each other read their private emails and texts."[29]

Although the workshop participants seemed to understand why their parents want to have their passwords, they noted the potential risks of giving them to friends and partners - if the relationship fails, the ex-friend or ex-partner might post something malicious on their social network profile or lock them out of it by changing their user name and password.

Hacking into Facebook was also a common thread in the workshop discussions. A friend might gain access to a Facebook page and post something for a laugh or someone might be more malicious and do it to upset or offend the page owner or their friends.

24. 'Realtime Generation: Rise of the Digital First Era', Logicalis, October 2013
http://www.uk.logicalis.com/Global/United%20Kingdom/Reports/Logicalis-Real-Time-Generation-2013.pdf
25. 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, October 2013
http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/october-2013/research07Oct2013.pdf
26. 'Teens, Social Media and Privacy', Pew Research Center Internet Project, May 2013
http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-Social-Media-And-Privacy
27. 'The New Millennials Will Keep Calm and Carry On', MTV, June 2013
http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-mtv-study-shows-sharp-differences-between-younger-and-older-millenni-als-211971261.html
28. 'Teens, kindness and cruelty on social network sites', Pew Research Center Internet Project, November 2011
http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media
29. 'Young, in love and sharing everything, including a password', New York Times, 17 January 2012
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/18/us/teenagers-sharing-passwords-as-show-of-affection.html?_r=0

*"I was with my friend...and someone messaged her saying 'Are you and Adam OK?'
- that's her boyfriend - and someone had hacked her, set her status to single and started
in-boxing people saying it was me that cheated on her with him. I was like 'What the hell?'"*
Girl, 17, Berkshire

Even if someone hacks into a social networking profile as a joke, it can be upsetting for the owner because their friends and family might see the comments and they could go viral.

For teenagers, it seems, emerging cultural norms and peer pressure are muddying their approach to digital security and privacy. While they acknowledge that sharing passwords could have negative consequences, they are still doing it - sometimes with upsetting results. It is clear that young people need guidance when it comes to protecting their all-important online profiles.

C: What kind of education campaigns appeal to young people?

As part of the Digital Lives project, young people were asked for their opinions on the best way to reach them with educational messages. Communicating these kind of messages to this audience through digital campaigns is far from easy - tone, authenticity and humour are crucial components otherwise teenagers might simply switch off.

The key challenge is how to bring about changes in behaviour. For, while young people might be able to repeat back a campaign message and even acknowledge the benefits of doing something in a certain way, an important measure of success for any campaign is if its target audience starts to behave differently.

The workshop participants were shown some recent campaigns and materials aimed at eight to 15-year-olds and asked for their reactions. These included:

- 'See Something Say Something' - Nickelodeon's anti-bullying campaign based around an animated series (aimed at six to 12-year-olds)

- 'First To A Million' - a multiple choice/multiple ending video by CEOP to educate young people aged 11 to 18 about internet safety and the consequences of generating and sharing controversial content

- 'We Are Man' - a short video by the charity End Violence Against Women (EVAW) that uses a combination of humour and shock tactics to highlight the issue of violence against women

- 'Take The Knife' - a series of interactive videos by the Metropolitan Police to dissuade young people from carrying weapons

Specific areas for exploration included which formats young people prefer, which key messages they took away and what would have made the campaigns more effective. Feedback included:

- Animation featuring audio testimony from real people was considered to be one of the best formats and likely to make young people think differently

• Offering different outcome options was a popular tactic - participants felt engaged and keen to see what the conclusion would be

• The content that the participants said they would be most likely to share was the 'We Are Man' video as the compilations of people failing at sports were considered funny and would make their friends laugh

• Authenticity is crucial - some of the campaigns discussed in the workshop did not score well as they were considered to be too slow-paced, condescending and too obviously educational and didactic

The participants also discussed the optimal environment for these kind of campaigns. Feedback included:

• The best place for this kind of learning to be introduced is in schools

• Stealth learning and viral campaigns work well - leading with shock tactics or comedy and then subtly introducing learning points and links to resources was favoured

• Peer-to-peer learning would be popular - teenagers would like to teach adults and younger children, through discussion and stories (a future proof device because the pool of knowledge is constantly updated)

D: What digital advice would teenagers give younger children? (in their own words)

1. Make sure you know what you are clicking on before you click on it
2. Don't post anything that might undermine you or your credibility later in life
3. Report any abuse against you and block people you don't know or don't trust
4. Don't pretend to be something you're not
5. Ask friends and family for their consent before posting things they are in
6. Don't do anything online when you're drunk
7. If you receive something inappropriate (like a naked picture of your girlfriend), don't share it
8. Tell your parents if something bothers you online
9. Don't get involved in other people's arguments - stick to your own business
10. Check your privacy settings to be sure who can see you online

Conclusion

The Digital Lives insights project provides further evidence that teenagers' lives are increasingly played out on digital platforms and that social networks are at the core of this - helping them to manage friendships, share information and have fun. They clearly enjoy the freedom the internet offers and they are often extremely sophisticated in how they use it.

As the Pew Research Center Internet Project explains, "Teens are cognizant of their online reputations and take steps to curate the content and appearance of their social media presence... For many teens, Facebook [is] seen as an extension of offline interactions and the social negotiation and maneuvering inherent to teenage life."[30]

But there is also a downside to young people's love of all things digital with many of the Digital Lives participants recognising that the risks they take online can have negative consequences in the same way that the risks they take offline do.

Teenagers taking risks is nothing new, of course - they push boundaries by doing things like staying out late without permission[31] - and academics acknowledge that risk-taking is an important part of growing up and not inevitably harmful[32]. What remains crucial is that young people understand how to build resilience and develop coping strategies[33].

The Digital Lives participants demonstrated that, in many ways, life in the digital world mirrors life offline. The challenges and risks that young people face online tend to be the same as those they deal with offline - as they grow up, they might come across people who are mean to them, see things they would rather not see and feel unsafe, for example. But there are also some crucial differences, some of which are positive and some negative.

In the digital world, things can happen in front of an audience of hundreds or thousands, thereby amplifying the consequences. Furthermore, young people are sometimes left to their own devices because the adults they would normally go to for advice might not know how to guide them. On the other hand, they do not face physical threats online and they can, with help, learn to have more control and autonomy over their digital presence.

With this in mind, industry and other stakeholders should continue to play an important role in engaging and supporting children, teenagers, parents, teachers and other influencers so that young people get a solid start on their journey to becoming responsible, resilient and effective digital citizens.

Discussing teenagers' digital experiences first-hand in an informal workshop environment allowed the Digital Lives study to identify a number of challenges that young people face. Furthermore, the conversations about education campaigns revealed how important it is that they are tailored to their target audience - that way, it is more likely that young people will not only remember the key messages but take action and change their behaviour as a result.

The key findings of the Digital Lives study include:

- In many ways, offline and online have merged for teenagers

- The move from primary school to secondary school is a key milestone for a change in digital behaviour and taking risks

- Teenagers are sophisticated internet users but they still need guidance, especially in terms of critical thinking, dealing with peer pressure and responding to emerging cultural norms

- Resilience to digital threats and annoyances appears to be learnt through trial and error

- While teenagers enjoy technology, it sometimes overwhelms them - they need regular digital time-outs

- Humour, authenticity and subtlety are important elements in ensuring the success of education campaigns

- Animation, real-life examples and different outcome options are the preferred formats for communications around risk-taking

- Older teenagers are keen to draw on their own experiences in order to help younger children (advice from peers may resonate better than advice from adults)

- Young people want to have structured discussions about their digital lives with their parents and teachers

These findings will inform existing initiatives, such as Google's Good to Know (www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow) and Vodafone's Digital Parenting (www.vodafone.com/parents). Google and Vodafone also commit to integrating the key findings from Digital Lives in new projects aimed at young people and their families, some of which - such as Well Versed (www.theparentzone.co.uk/wellversed) - are already under way.

30. Teens, Social Media and Privacy, Pew Research Center Internet Project, May 2013
http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-Social-Media-And-Privacy
31. 'Understanding Society: Findings 2012', Understanding Society, February 2012
https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/findings/2012
32. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/1/EU%20Kids%20Online%20national%20perspectives%20%28Isero%29.pdf
33. 'EU Kids Online: national perspectives', LSE, October 2012
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Appendices

1. Workshop information

Researchers had six hours of contact time with each of the four groups of young people. Every session had a mixture of creative/practical mapping exercises, whole group discussions and one-to-one private interviews.

There were at least two moderators present in every session to facilitate discussion. All participant contributions were recorded on camera and later transcribed to ensure accuracy. The research was based on the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/research-ethics.aspx)

Please note: In instances where findings are backed up with quotes from multiple respondents of the same gender, it does not necessarily mean the finding is exclusive to that gender.

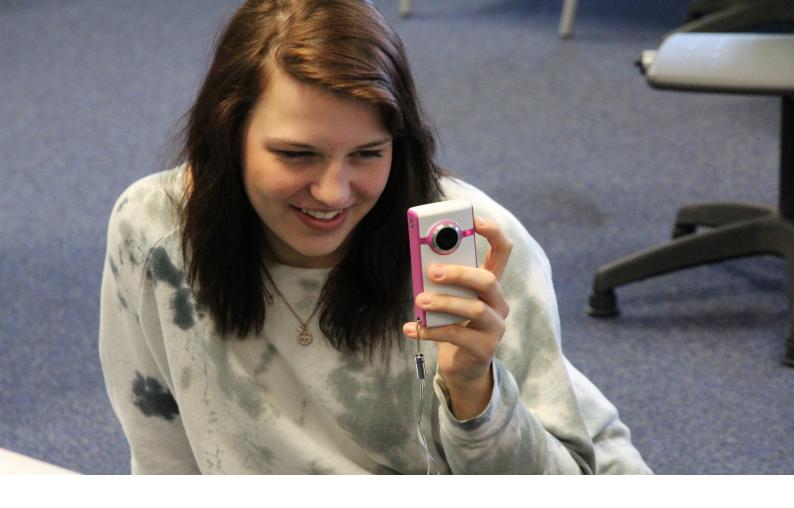| Name / ID	Location	Total in group	No. females	No. males	Age Range	Ethnicity
London School	London	16	9	7	16-18	Very mixed - mostly minority ethnic backgrounds and minority white ethinic backgrounds
Oxford 6th Form	Oxford	15	11	4	14-17	White British majority
Berkshire Youth Centre	Berkshire	21	7	14	12-18	White British majority - 5% Asian backgrounds
Leicester 6th Form	Leicester	20	10	10	12-18	White British majority - 15% majority ethnic backgrounds
TOTALS		**72**	**37**	**35**	**12-18**	

2. Members of the Digital Lives advisory board

Dr Richard Graham
Dr Richard Graham is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and Clinical Director of the Adolescent Department at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. In 2010, he led the launch of the UK's first Technology Addiction Service specifically for young people, at Capio Nightingale Hospital and he was also Clinical Director of Big White Wall, an innovative online mental health support service. Richard has worked extensively with industry organisations, such as Vodafone and the UKCCIS Evidence Group, to promote digital resilience and wellbeing for young people using new technologies.

Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE
Sonia Livingstone OBE is a Professor in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE and the Director of EU Kids Online, a 33-country network funded by the EC's Safer Internet

Programme. She has written and edited a number of books and academic articles examining the opportunities and risks afforded by digital technologies in a range of contexts, including children and young people's experience of digital media at home and school. Sonia serves on the Executive Board of UKCCIS and has advised a number of organisations, including the BBC, Ofcom and UNICEF.

Marketa Mach

Marketa is a digital consultant who has led strategy development for a wide range of global brands, including Microsoft, Motorola and Santander, as well as advising digital start-ups. She is the former CEO of Go ON UK, UK Government Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox's digital skills-building charity committed to boosting the digital capability of SMEs, charities and the UK's over seven million offline citizens. She also held the position of Head of Digital for EMEA at Apple.

Mary MacLeod OBE

Mary MacLeod OBE is an independent family policy adviser and a leading voice on children and family welfare. She was the founding Chief Executive of the Family and Parenting Institute and has also held positions at Barnardo's, Lothian Region Social Work Department, ChildLine and the Universities of Edinburgh and North London. Mary is the Independent Vice-Chair of the Internet Watch Foundation and served on the Executive Board of UKCCIS.

Dr Linda Papadopoulos

Dr Linda Papadopoulos is one of the most well-known and respected psychologists working in the UK today. Her 14 year career as a research scientist and practicing psychologist has led to her work being published in some of the most well-regarded academic journals and given rise to a high profile media-career. Her observations regarding the psychology behind news and current events are syndicated by the press and discussed by television and radio networks both in Britain and in the USA.

Vicki Shotbolt

Vicki first became involved in creating parent-friendly initiatives when she joined the Family and Parenting Institute in 1999. She cultivated this interest by working with children's and parents' charities, including the Children's Society and the Housing Association Charitable Trust, before setting up The Parent Zone in 2005. The Parent Zone helps companies and organisations to engage with parents by creating practical approaches to making parenting less stressful. Vicki serves on the boards of UKCCIS and Gingerbread.

3. About Google, Vodafone and Bold Creative

About Google

Founded in 1998 by Stanford Ph.D. students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Google's search engine now helps millions of people around the world search for a wide range of services and information every day. Google offers dozens of other popular services, from YouTube to Gmail and Android. Products are generally offered for free for personal use, supported by revenue from advertising and sales to businesses. Although only 15 years old, Google has been in the UK for over a decade and employs over 2,000 people across offices in London and Manchester, including hundreds of engineers.

Google works hard to provide anyone using our services with a safe and positive experience, offering simple safety tools across a whole range of products. For more information about staying safe on Gmail, Chrome, YouTube and other Google products, please visit the Family Safety Centre: www.google.co.uk/safetycentre. Based on the findings of this report, Google has recently launched 'Well Versed', a new safety campaign designed alongside The Parent Zone, Livity and leading YouTube personalities. The project invites 13-18 year olds to create a short video with their top tip for staying safe online. The best submissions will be woven together by our YouTube stars into a creative and engaging short film to be premiered at Google in June 2014. To find out more about the project, please visit the Well Versed website: www.wellversed.co.uk

About Vodafone

Vodafone, as one of the world's largest communications companies, connects people all over the globe who benefit from the digital world through education, health and entertainment as well as communication. However we are aware of the concerns parents may have about their children's digital world. By providing both tools and education and awareness initiatives such as Digital Parenting and Web Super Skills www.vodafone.com/parents Vodafone looks to provide parents with access to independent advice as well as knowledge of the controls that are available to them, for them to make informed decisions on solutions that they deem the most suitable for their children. Digital Lives is part of that ongoing programme. For more information about Vodafone please see www.vodafone.com

About Bold Creative

Bold Creative is London-based digital agency that works in partnership with the UK's most progressive organisations connecting their brands with young people through insight, innovation, entertainment and change. By making their voices heard, Bold helps their clients create products and campaigns for young people that are relevant, engaging and useful. They ensure those voices are heard through listening to and understanding young people, and by building more inspiring connections between them and the brands, products and causes they care about. Their track record in production, design, content creation, digital product development, interactive web content and games development uniquely enables them to achieve very specific commercial and educational aims.

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