#DITTO

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EDITION 20 SEPT 2019

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Foreword from Alan Mackenzie

Welcome to Edition 20 of #DITTO

Hi there, I'm Alan Mackenzie.

I'm an independent consultant specialising in online safety, specifically within education to children, young people, schools and other organizations, and parents.

I'm a strong believer that technology, for the most part, is neutral; behaviour is the most important aspect.

To understand behaviour, we have to be a part of children's lives in order to understand what they're doing with technology and why.

We have to be curious and guide them to realise the wonderful opportunities that the online world gives to all of us, and be there to support them when they need it.

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What a lovely summer we've had, plenty of sunshine and happy faces.

I've got a diverse range of topics for you this month and I hope there's something for everybody.

Towards the end of the magazine I've briefly gone into the topic of wellbeing with a personal story. Although strictly speaking wellbeing isn't online safety, the lines between safety, wellbeing, relationships, citizenship etc. are becoming increasingly blurred, and I think wellbeing is such an important issue right now I wanted to share a few thoughts with you.

My opinion piece may be a little controversial for some but I think it's important I speak my mind if only to give you a different viewpoint to think about. My concern is that there is so much public outcry about certain online sites and services, yet in comparison there seems to be so little against the root of the problem, the perpetrators themselves. Are we focussing on the wrong things?

Feel free to give feedback and let's hope a little of this September sunshine hangs around for a while longer.

How safe are our children? 2019

OPINION

One of the most useful reports to come out annually is the 'How Safe are our Children' report from the NSPCC (National Society for the Protection and Care of Children).

This year, the report has concentrated on online abuse and many of the statistics show the scale and increasing complexity in the range of issues that parents, carers and professionals are having to deal with.

Rather than present you with some of the statistics in this article I just want to share an opinion, not about the NSPCC or this report per se, but more to do with my frustration that a significant amount of effort is being put into the protection of our children by holding technical companies to account. Is this right and proportionate? I'm not convinced.

I recommend you take a look at the full report to get a really good understanding particularly if you are the safeguarding lead in school.

Furthermore, be careful what you are reading into the statistics if you are just reading the graphics or headlines in the report; this isn't to disrespect the work the NSPCC does (and this report is really good), but you can look at other research and see wildly different results for a number of reasons, such as:

- The wording of the question, who was asked the question (parent or child) etc.

- Some of the results are drawn from different surveys. The NSPCC has gone into detail where there may be gaps or weaknesses in the data. For example some of the stats are drawn from the annual Ofcom research

where the sample size is incredibly small (1,430 parents of children between the ages of 5-15), whereas the London Grid for Learning sample is nearly 40,000 children.

For example, 90% of 11-16 year olds said they have a social media account, the most popular being Facebook at 73%. I have never found this, in fact Facebook is way down the list when I speak to young people, sometimes not even on the list at all, but my suspicion (and it is just a suspicion) that many will be referring to Facebook Messenger which is simply a chat app similar to WhatsApp (also owned by Facebook). In the same survey, 60% of 11-16 year olds said they had a YouTube account, but if you were to alter the question to ask how many USE YouTube, the figure would likely be higher, after all you don't need an account to use YouTube.

Whilst the report is very good, it does spend a lot of time proportioning a significant amount of blame on tech companies under the banner of their 'Wild West Web' campaign.

I get this, I understand and I do agree to an extent, however regardless of how much we all shout, regardless of the legislation the government may put in place once the Online Harms white paper comes to fruition, it only goes so far and will never ever eradicate the horrendous abuse that children are exposed to online.

For the full report go to:

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1747/how-safe-are-our-children-2019.pdf

Remember, technology is just where (and sometimes how) it happens; it facilitates the abuse. It shouldn't be allowed to happen but history has shown repeatedly that these big tech companies will only do as little as they have to, rather than taking a more pro-active approach in their legal, moral and ethical duties, so the NSPCC are absolutely right to call these companies out, and the government should be legislating. Some (myself included) would argue that this should have happened many years ago. But shouldn't we be dedicating our voices and resources to the actual offenders who do the harm to our children?

For example, under the heading, "How can we protect children from online abuse?" the report states, "Children deserve better protection. That's why our Wild West Web campaign has led the way calling for statutory regulation of social networks."

Yes, our children deserve better protection. Yes, tech companies should be doing more and should be doing better. But you can only realistically protect children by finding the offenders and bringing them to justice.

Within the report there are a number of key messages, for example:

- There has been a year on year increase in the number and rate of police-recorded online child sexual offences in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- In the first 18 months since sexual communication with a child became an offence in England and Wales 5, 211 offences against children under the age of 16 have been recorded by police forces.

Technology can assist massively in this area to help catch the perpetrator. Many offenders are caught by technology, for example artificial intelligence software which is able to capture illegal images. This means that the abuse has already happened, but consider a different angle for a moment. More and more online communications are becoming encrypted due to the justifiable concerns of the public regarding abuse of personal and private information. When data is encrypted, the technology used to capture abuse is rendered useless, it doesn't work.

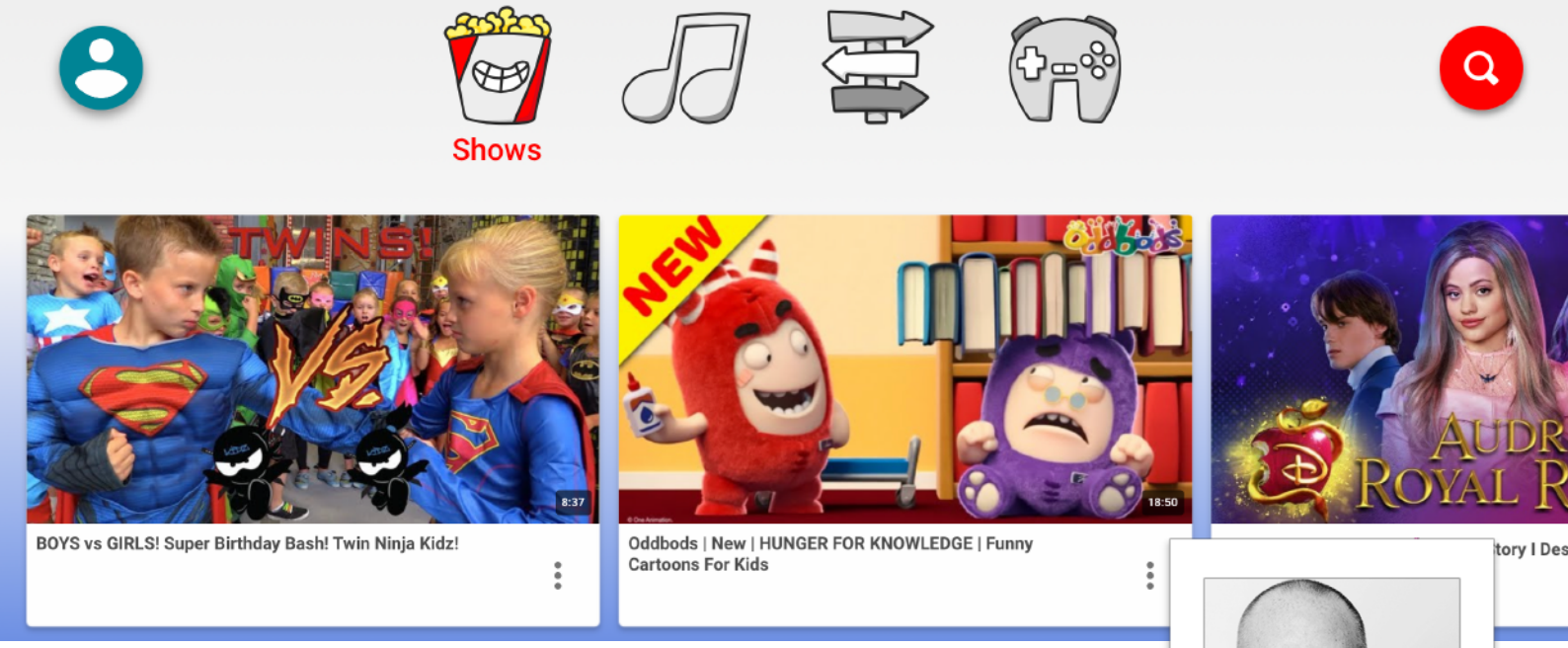
Around the world it appears that privacy has a much louder voice than child protection, and technology companies are responding to this, which could be to the detriment of catching offenders, but we keep coming back to that same point - offenders.

We can't blame everything on the tech companies, that's blowing a smokescreen on the real problem. It's so much bigger than that and at the moment it just seems that we're sticking bandages over things. I hate the corporate term, but we really do need some serious blue sky thinking. We've got to be innovative and realistic; we cannot continue with the current trend of concentrating on blaming technology companies when it is the offenders who are doing the offending.

Technology can do a lot to assist and it is absolutely right that the NSPCC and governments are calling these companies out for not doing enough, but only when more resources are targeted at offenders and there's more collaboration around the world to assist law enforcement and those who work with law enforcement (such as the Internet Watch Foundation) will we see harm start to reduce.

This is where I believe the NSPCC and others should be concentrating their considerable influence.

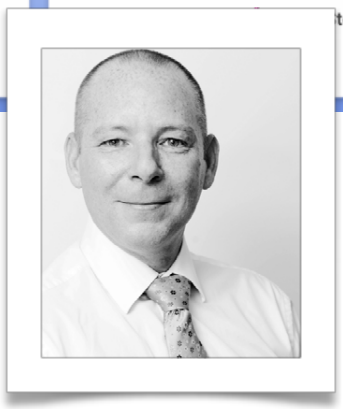
Alan Mackenzie



YOUTUBE KIDS

When the new YouTube Kids app came out here in the UK it was January 2016. I remember reviewing it and I loved it. Sure, it had a couple of flaws; now and again unsavoury content managed to get through the algorithms and human moderators and despite YouTube promising they wouldn't advertise on the platform, they did start advertising. But overall it was a great new addition, particularly as it was aimed at children under the age of 7 years old.

However there was an obvious issue right from the beginning, according to the terms and conditions of the main YouTube service you have to be 18 to have a YouTube account or 13 with parental permission. Interesting, given that there are millions of channels on YouTube which are clearly aimed at younger children. This is something the Federal Trade Commission in the U.S. has been investigating, stating that YouTube have been profiting from children under the age of 13, which is against the law (COPPA in the US and now GDPR in Europe) and subsequently fined YouTube $170 million at the beginning of September. A lot of money you might think, but compare that to the $5 billion fine given to Facebook at the beginning of the year for privacy violations it isn't even loose change for these big corporations.

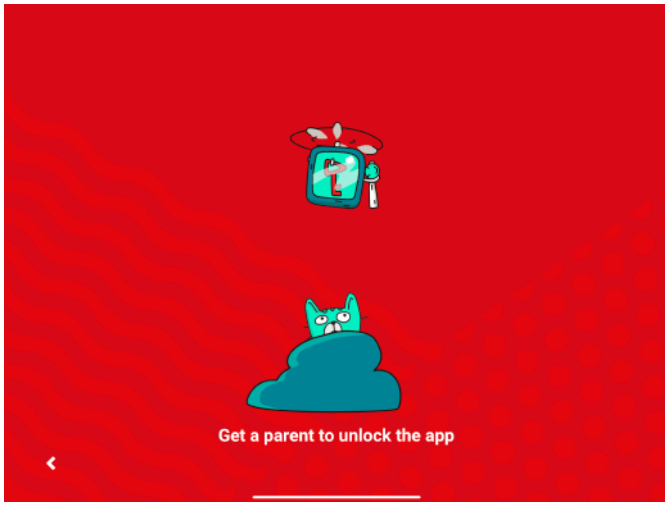


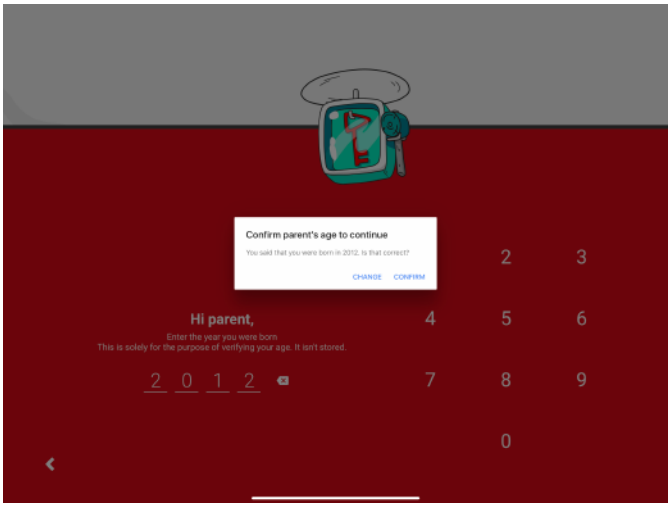
This left an age gap of 8-12 year olds which was never clarified, or if it was I completely missed it, but now we have a newer version of YouTube Kids (app and website), and this one is for children aged between pre-school and 12. You can look at this from two angles:

- It's great and will really help parents to manage and moderate the videos that their children watch.
- Are the videos/channels that older children currently watch on YouTube Kids? If not, what then?

I wanted to test YouTube Kids so here are my findings:

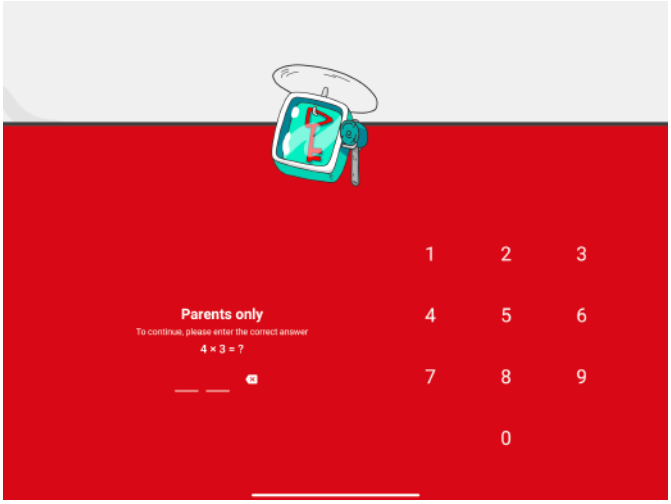
When you download and start the app for the first time you are met with a screen where you can state if you're a child or if you're a parent. If you click 'child' you're told that you need to get a parent to unlock the app. Tick in the box, good start.





You then click to say you're a parent and you're met with a screen where you type in your year of birth to 'verify your age'. Quite how this is age verification is beyond me, but I decided to play along, so I input my year of birth as 2012, effectively making me a 7 year old parent; it accepted me as an adult, major fail! I then had to pass a maths test with a multiplication question just to really really prove I'm an adult:

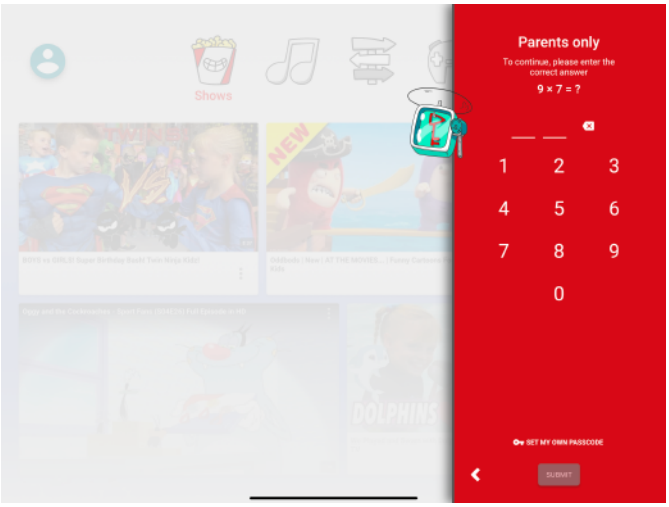
"What is 4 X 3?"



Once you're past this taxing verification process you can then decide on the age of your child; 4 and under, 5-7 and 8-12. I like this, there needs to be differentiation between younger and older users so it is pleasing to see.

The content within each age range is split into 4 areas: shows, music, explore and gaming. You are met with what are presumably the recommended channels but you also have the ability to search by typing or voice search. The search facility can be turned off within settings which I'm sure will be very welcome by many parents.

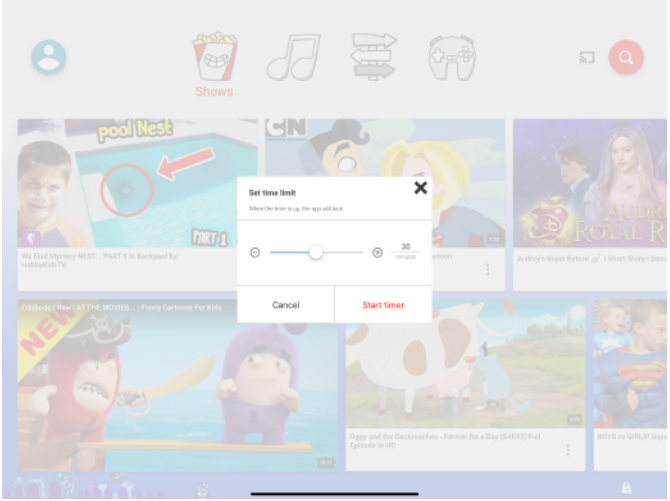
I tried to search for some of the more popular channels that children tell me they currently watch. Many of these are inappropriate for their age and I couldn't find any of them. That's good, but it also means some parents are going to have a fight on their hands.



Speaking of settings, you can get to these by tapping on the gear icon at the bottom right of the screen. To change any of the settings you need to - yes you guessed it - answer another maths question. This one stumped me a little, 9 X 7, so given I was on my iPad anyway I opened up the Calculator app and got the answer nice and easily.

Instead of a maths question you can set up your own passcode which, given the stringent maths 'security feature', I would recommend parents do.

You can also set a timer from within the settings. This is a great idea as it's easy to get drawn into watching video after video. Anything between 1-60 minutes can be set, at the end of which an animated screen appears and the parental lock code has to be entered, or the dreaded maths question if you haven't set up a code.
However, you can only set a timer on the app, not on the website version!



Thoughts

Despite my cynical write-up in a couple of places, particularly the laughable parental verification and the maths questions, it's a good app (and website - www.youtubekids.com), but I want to approach my thoughts from a pragmatic, real-world perspective.

I couldn't find any of the bigger channels that children tell me they watch, for example PewDiePie, Morgz, Jake and Logan Paul and many others. This is good as the content is highly inappropriate for children, but the fact is that many are watching this type of content. So it worries me whether they will be content with this new app and website. For children that are watching these channels it's going to take a lot of work from parents to make sure their children aren't finding ways to watch videos on the traditional app and website. Which raises a question: why can't some of the greatest technological brains on the planet come up with a proper age verification system to use across all their services? I know it's complicated, but come on……

On the flip side, if young children are introduced to this app at an early age and that becomes the norm for them, perhaps over the next few years we're going to stop hearing about some of the abhorrent content that children have seen, often through no fault of their own.

It's disappointing to see that YouTube is still going to collect information in order to target advertising to children, albeit what they refer to as contextual advertising, which is loosely based on what individual children are watching, search terms etc.

I say it's disappointing because these companies are making enough money, they really don't need to be exploiting children to fill their pockets. Of course nothing is ever free and these services must cost a huge amount of money to operate. As a parent myself I would be quite happy to pay a small fee each year to have no advertising, but that's never going to happen.

On a final note for parents, if your children are using this app I would strongly recommend headphones for you or for them. The background music and scrolling effects become excruciatingly annoying after about 5 seconds.

Other YouTube News

Abbreviated Subscriber Count

In order to address 'creator concerns about stress and wellbeing' YouTube are going to start abbreviating subscriber counts for those with a channel which has over 1,000 subscribers.

For example if you have 1,237,001 subscribers on your channel it will be abbreviated to 1.23M.

If you can figure out how this is going to help creators with stress and wellbeing can you please let me know?

YouTube Fined for Collecting Kids' Data

As I mentioned on a previous page, Google (YouTube) was recently fined $170M for privacy violations, essentially collecting the personal information of children under the age of 13 and using this information to target advertising. YouTube has always hid behind their terms and conditions, stating that users must be 13 or over, yet has done nothing to stop younger viewers using the service or the tens of millions of videos on YouTube that clearly target children.

However, the fine is pathetic to say the least when you consider that Alphabet (the parent company of Google, YouTube etc.) made a profit of over $30 billion last year.

Responsibilities, Budgets, Online Safety and Tick Boxes

Is it time for a fresh approach to online safeguarding?

As school staff return from a well-earned rest most will already have planned the new term ahead. The fast pace of change in todays world mean pressure to consider how we will fit in all the requirements of our job, especially so in the public sector which has faced so many cuts and the challenges arising out of them.

Designated Safeguarding leads will be looking at the new additions to Keeping Children Safe in Education – Sept 2019 and the upcoming SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) - guidance released June 2019 and compulsory in state schools from Sept 2020. In the online safety world add advice on 'Sexting', and 'using external speakers to support online safety' documents and the burden of keeping up to speed is increased.

Prioritising budgets and school needs is a daily challenge to senior leadership and safeguarding, although very important, is one of many considerations. Within the safeguarding environment 'online safety' has often been a poor relation. The widely used 360safe tool from SWGfL demonstrates this as schools consistently self-assess staff training on online safety as 'poor' and have done so since the inception of the tool some 8 years ago https://bit.ly/2ZnwKa6 .

So, against the background of demands from Govt and others how does online safeguarding get practised in schools?

It is no hyperbole to say that technology and its use has seeped into our everyday lives to such

an extent that it just part of our fabric. What has changed however is the complexity of the many behaviours, tools, platforms and the connections we make, especially so for young people who have used and utilised the online platforms, often in engaging, imaginative, creative and inventive ways. Alongside this, those same platforms have provided an avenue for unscrupulous people to take advantage of this open online arena to steal, sexually target, bully, shame, coerce or threaten others.

Behaviours have become more complex and the language we use to describe them often fails to differentiate between serious and less serious. Bullying can be one example – this could encompass – threats, coercion, sexual blackmail, self-esteem attacks, exclusion and a host of behavioural issues dependent on the attitude and knowledge of the person reporting/dealing; simply calling it bullying can be very misleading and lead to it being wrongly reported and minimised.

Against this background how are schools tackling the education of their students and staff to build resilience and provide reporting routes and support when issues arise?

Sadly, in the world we live, this is often where budgets come into the equation. Although all agree the safety of children is paramount it is but one of many demands in a school. In answer to this a school may often attempt to 'cover' online safety by bringing in an outside speaker to talk to staff or students. This can, in all honesty, be a useful thing to do. However how it is done has become more and more important given the complexity, already discussed, of the many issues young people and staff face around online behaviours.

In schools within the UK there has been in the past, and sometimes presently, a 'tick box' culture relating to online safety. This means spending precious budget on an external speaker. In order to make sure things are covered that speaker may be asked to speak to whole year groups, in a Secondary school this could be as many as 300 children, in an assembly. They may even be provided with a whole lesson period.

Often, they are asked to cover 'esafety' or 'online safety' as if the whole issue could be wrapped up in one lesson with no feedback or engagement from the students. This is simply ineffective. Students feel unable in a large peer

group to comment or engage. Often, they will lump this together with all the other warning lessons they receive around drugs, sex and alcohol etc.

Many will simply switch off, even with the most engaging of speakers. Some say this is better than nothing, but I strongly disagree. If a job is worth doing…….

I know of course I could lose work in this, but I am professionally happy to do so. Rather this than feel as if I have done a disservice, especially to young people.

How then can schools engage with online safeguarding in a positive, honest and meaningful way without breaking a budget? An odd comparison but could the national Policing intelligence model help? Let's take a couple of aspects out of the below list:

- Setting strategic direction
- Making prioritised and defendable resourcing decisions
- Allocating resources intelligently
- Formulating tactical plans and tasking and co ordinating resulting activity
- Managing the associated risks

In a school there will always be someone dealing with and making decisions on incidents arising out of the use of technology and the internet. This may be the Head in a Primary or the DSL or deputy in a senior school. That person will be invested with the intelligence of where the problems lie. This may be bullying on gaming sites, sexting incidents, victim shaming, self-harm or a litany of minor incidents. In some schools time spent dealing with this may be minimal in others time consuming. Why not use this intelligence to target education on the specific problem area.

An example – You are the DSL in a Secondary school. There has been a rash of sexting incidents and a year 9 girl has been targeted and victim shamed. The girl has spent time off school and has started to self-harm. This is one of several incidents within the year 9 cohort. Counselling has been provided and you and others have spent some time talking to year 9's and their parents.

Looking at the model above what would be your strategic direction? It is probably not going to be productive to do assemblies across the school, but it may be useful to employ an outside speaker to talk to year 9 classes across the day about the realities of sexting, potential impacts, health, social, emotional and legal implications. This would hopefully include, with a quality speaker, the honest and open dialogue needed to encourage young people to consider all the aspects involved. This would fit points two and three in the model. Tactical plans in point 4 could involve the online safety group within the school which should include young people. This group could identify trends in the school and we go back to number 1 on the list.

My apologies if this seems a long-winded way of saying that I think schools need to move away from tick boxing to a focused, prioritised and practical way to tackle online education and problems. A good example of tailored training can be found on the South West Grid for Learning website where some of the issues are highlighted. https://swgfl.org.uk/training/online-safety-training/

- online bullying
- gaming
- protecting staff
- personal privacy & security
- child sexual exploitation
- engaging parents
- sexting
- inspection
- educating online safety
- virtual self-harm
- impact of technology use on development, physical and mental health
- online sexual predation & grooming
- overview of current e safety research
- online safeguarding regulation & legislation
- effective online safety policy & practice

Other organisations like mine www.aeconsultancy.org.uk, Alan who produces this magazine and respected presenters on sites like www.aacoss.org can also provide tailored sessions to fit your school, circumstances and issues.

Of course none of this precludes preventative work in any organisation. Good online safety education across the whole school will undoubtedly reduce risky behaviours and potentially decrease the work of the DSL in dealing with incidents. I am sure we would all like a decrease in our daily workloads.

Thanks for reading

Alan Earl

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WELLBEING

If you have been reading this magazine for a while you'll know that I'm quite an open book. As you read this I'm speaking to you as an individual, not to the masses.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that wellbeing has become such a big issue these last few years not only in terms of the scale of the issues we're seeing, but the scale of people who are affected too.

For years this has been tackled in the curriculum in various ways and over the last couple of years at least it's becoming much more prominent with schools doing some amazing work.

But whilst we concentrate on the children, we don't always recognize this in ourselves too.

I started to experience some wellbeing issues and I want to share this with you to ram home the message - take care of yourself.

> 'If we're not at our best then we can't do our best for the children'

Stresses of work, home, societal pressures, friends, relationships and much more take a toll on all of us. This year more than any other I've been feeling it and I knew it was affecting me personally and professionally. What led to this? I don't know is the honest answer, it's likely a build-up of things, but I also think there were two large factors involved.

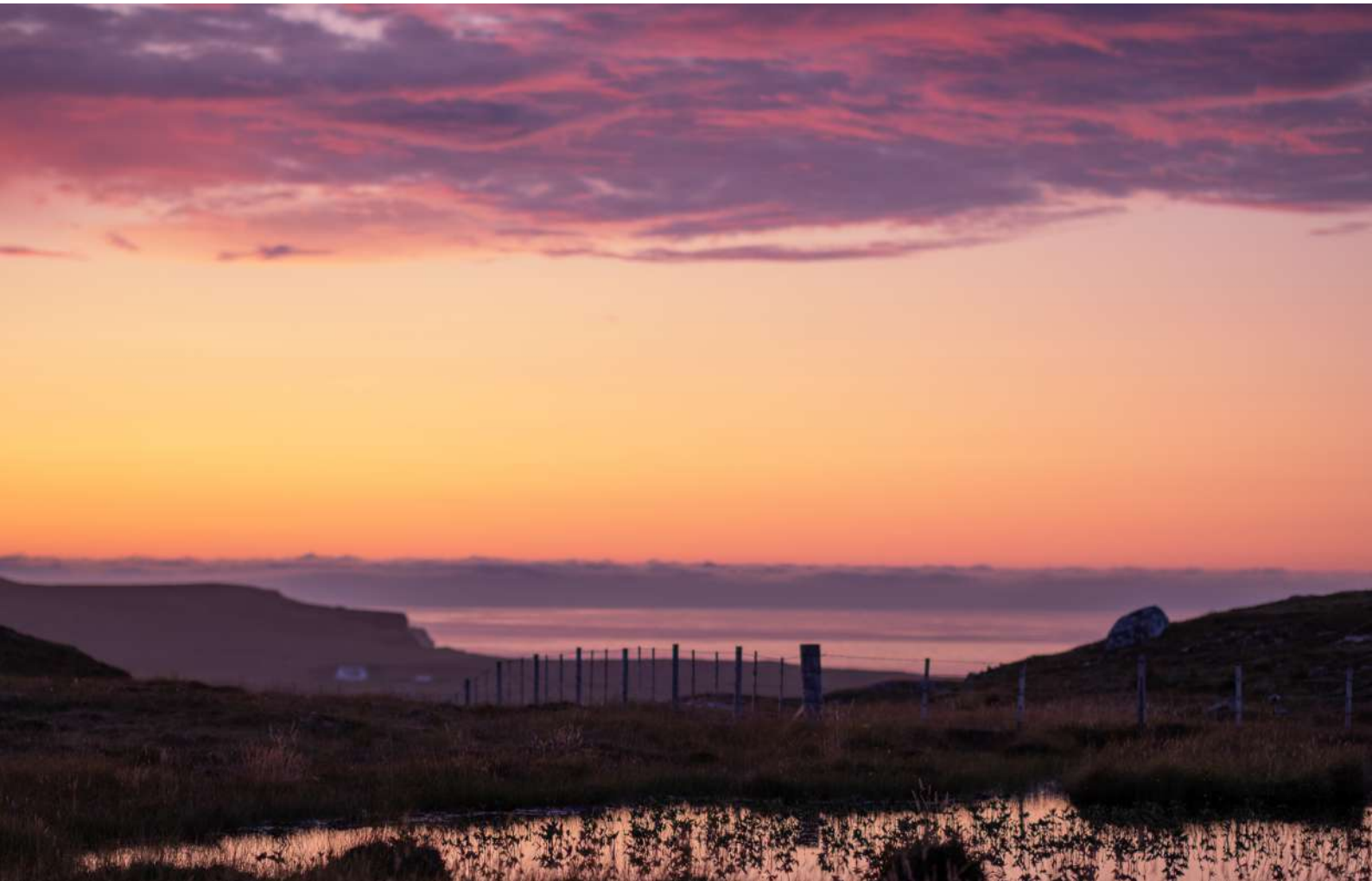
First of all, I'm a consultant, which means I'm always on the road or on a train; I'm a lone worker and believe me when I say that it can be a very lonely place at times.

Secondly, when you work in any area of safeguarding, which includes online safety, you're either researching, dealing with or talking about the worst of society and if you ask any police officer, social worker, counsellor etc. that can take a massive toll on your wellbeing.

I love my job, I love working with children, but when you start to question what you're doing and why you're doing it, you know things aren't right. And that's what was happening for some time prior to the school summer holidays. I found myself not wanting to get on the road to visit a school, I didn't put 100% into my talks, I started to question what I was doing and why I was doing it, I even started looking at other careers.

I don't want to go into too much detail, but suffice to say that I was lucky the school holidays were around the corner and I was able to take time to deliberate what was going on.
Like me, your work/life balance is probably tipped in the wrong direction. Sadly this seems to be something the majority experience and I'm convinced this is part of the issue. I'm a consultant, which means I own a business and I have to make money to pay the mortgage, just like everybody else, which often means working 7 days a week and late into the evening. That's a really unhealthy balance.

To cut a very long story short I knew that something had to change; I had to either stop what I was doing, rebalance, or allow things to get worse.



I have been an amateur photographer for over 20 years, in particular black and white photography; whether it be humans, animals or landscapes I love it but I don't get the time to do it enough. Over the school holidays I took my camera everywhere with me and took thousands of images, I loved it, it was my happy place.
I'm now a semi-pro photographer and over the next couple of years I will be doing more and more. Will anything come of this? I have no idea. I might do it 1 day a week, half a day every three weeks, I just don't know. There are gazillions of professional photographers out there so it may come to nothing at all. The point is that I have had to redress an imbalance in my life that was having a detrimental effect.

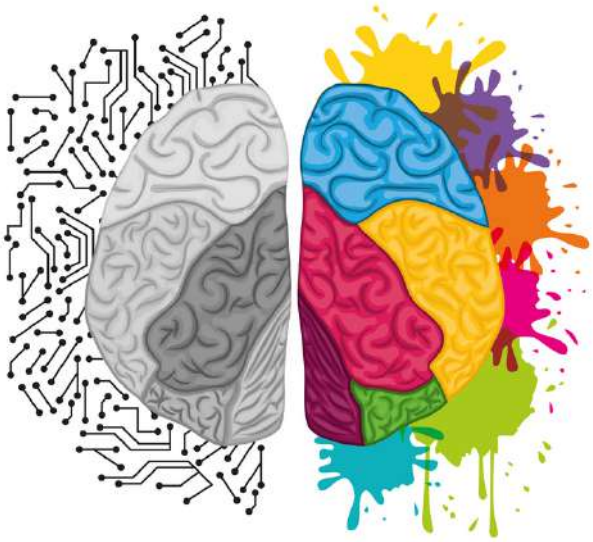
I knew that something was going wrong and I had to deal with it in a certain way that wasn't going to affect me personally, professionally and financially. As well as my family and my friends, photography is my happy place, to create memories that make people happy. It doesn't mean that my online safety work will diminish, I've just tipped the balance slightly in the positive direction. I've got something else to focus on. If anything it means that my work in online safety should improve even more; more focus, less procrastination because I'm happier.

But this is the point I want to make - as adults we are used to 'putting up and getting on with it'. Brexit, rising crime, what we see online, constant bad news stories and so much more eats away at us, often sub-consciously. Society as a whole is becoming much more pressurised.

You need to recognise if this is affecting you and if it is you need to meet it head on and do something about it, not bury your head in the sand. You may recognize this in a friend or a work colleague; help them.

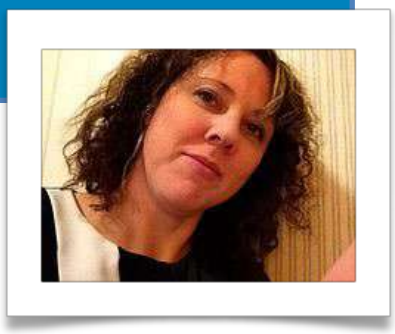
If we're not at our best then we can't do our best for the children, and for many of us the children are the reason why we do what we do.

Cyber Trauma



Catherine Knibbs (BSc, MBACP (Accred), UKCP Adult Psychotherapeutic Counselling, Doctoral Clinical Researcher, Cyber Specialist Therapist and Cybertrauma Theorist. Cath is the leading researcher on cyber trauma in the UK, specialising in online abuse in all forms and provides consultancy, education and training on this topic.

Web: www.cybertrauma.com



The Digital Economy Act 2017 introduced some significant changes, not least of which was the requirement that all websites that host over one third pornographic material, whether text, image, audio or video, must have age verification in place. This was a world-first not only in terms of what it was trying to do, the controversy of private companies holding data of adult browsing habits, concerns over the susceptibility of these companies to data breaches and also the complexity of age verification. Sites that do not implement age verification will be blocked to users from the UK.

There have been a number of delays to implementing the block, the latest of which is an administrative error that will reportedly take 6 months to sort out.

Whilst we wait for this to be actioned we are still in an ocean of unpredictability of young peoples use of the internet and which sites they may find themselves visiting.

Curiosity and happenstance are the main ingredients in children's accessibility to material that they are not prepared for in many domains of their development. For the focus here I will be referring to pornography and how this is as prevalent as the number of particles of water that make up the sea. Which is a lot and very likely uncountable, rather like the number of videos that depict sexual acts.

This article is shorter than some of my others as this topic is one I want to gently focus on, yet I do want to focus on it as a major problem for young people today.

Some young people may actively seek this material, others may be sent it, some accidentally type in words that lead them to the sites and some may see it over the shoulders of adults who view it in places that they really shouldn't, such as trains (and yes this actually happens).

For those of you who follow my work you are likely to know that I coined a phrase many years ago about this kind of material and the impact of young people viewing it. For those who don't, a simple reflection of a child or young person viewing porn is traumatic - cybertrauma. Some may be more affected than others.

So why would you need to know about this in an education setting or at home? Why does it matter?

In your e-safety lessons in school or discussions at home you are likely to discuss apps, settings and people. Pornography can be a taboo subject for many adults, it can be a lesson that a parent doesn't want their child involved in.

However this is the elephant in the room and young people need a space to be able to approach an adult to talk about what they have seen. We can also do this without talking directly about porn to younger children, we can offer an open dialogue about things that are on the internet.

Imagine being a young child/person who has seen this type of material. Will they have the words to be able to communicate? Perhaps they may want talk about how it made them feel? This is the approach to open up a conversation, held and contained by us the adults, allowing them to feel they can talk to you.

As I mentioned earlier the figures/ numbers of videos are unknown, the frequency with which young people can and do access these is also unknown, but whilst we wait for the age verification process to come into place which will assist us in our roles whether at school or at home, we need to give children and young people a place to speak and this is where the real world relationships and connections can help to mitigate, support and shelter our young people from the industry that is looking for new customers in as many places as possible.

Cath

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The course is delivered by Alan Mackenzie

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theCybersurvey

Young people's online experiences

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

The Cybersurvey is one of the richest databases of young people's views on digital life, exploring what it's like growing up in a digital world.

Invitation to Take Part

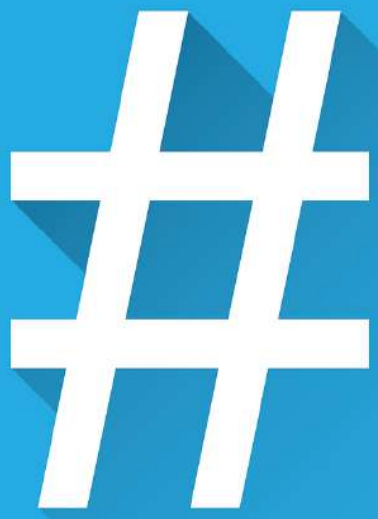
Developed by Adrienne Katz from Youthworks Consulting in 2008, the Cybersurvey provides schools with vital insights for safeguarding, online safety education and student wellbeing.

Free for schools, it is an online survey for students 11-16 exploring their online experiences and what might influence their online lives. A detailed survey report is produced along with briefing papers and infographics.

Youthworks Consulting works with a research partner, the University of Kingston Department of Psychology, which enables the research to be robust so that briefings for schools giving ideas for lesson plans or assemblies on the key issues raised by young people can be created.

The survey opens mid-October 2019 and remains open until the end of Anti-Bullying Week, 15th November 2019. You need to sign up before 20th Sept so that Youthworks Consulting can have everything ready for your school.

For more detailed information and to view examples of past reports please follow this link:



WHAT ARE HASHTAGS?

Hashtags are a way for users on social media services to increase engagement. For example I have a number of different Instagram accounts that I use for different purposes, one of which is my photography that I mentioned in a previous article.

On the right is a picture of a dog that I took over the summer holidays and prior to posting I applied a number of hashtags, such as #dogportraits #dogportraitsofinstagram etc.

The purpose of using hashtags is to increase engagement, such as people searching for (or following) those hashtags, liking or commenting on the post or following the account. There's many other reasons, such as business, but engagement is the main one.

This is a very positive and effective

way of using social media, remember social media is about being social, however that can depend on what your goal is and the hashtags you are using.

A couple of years ago, some of the larger social media companies stated they would be banning certain hashtags, and in some cases would point users to support and advice pages, for example if somebody was to search on hashtags related to self-harm. This was a laudable step forward,

but the trouble with such an approach is that users just start using different words, or variations of the hashtag to get around these restrictions. Equally, there are so many combinations it would be impossible to ban them all.

To give an example, over the last year or so I spoke to a few schools who have had a need to look at the social media accounts of students due to a particular child protection concern.

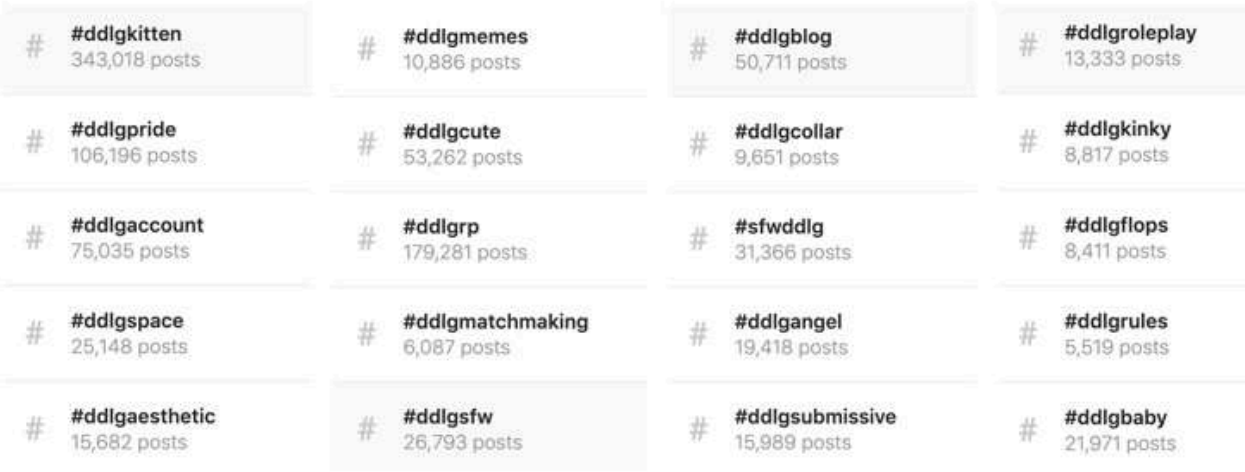
As part of this investigation they found a very small number using the hashtag #ddlg; this stands for 'daddy dom, little girl'. It is a sub genre of BDSM between two consenting adults where the female will act, dress and speak like a little girl (child). Also, in a small number of these cases, some of the girls were linking to their Amazon wishlist (so that men could send gifts) or their Paypal account.

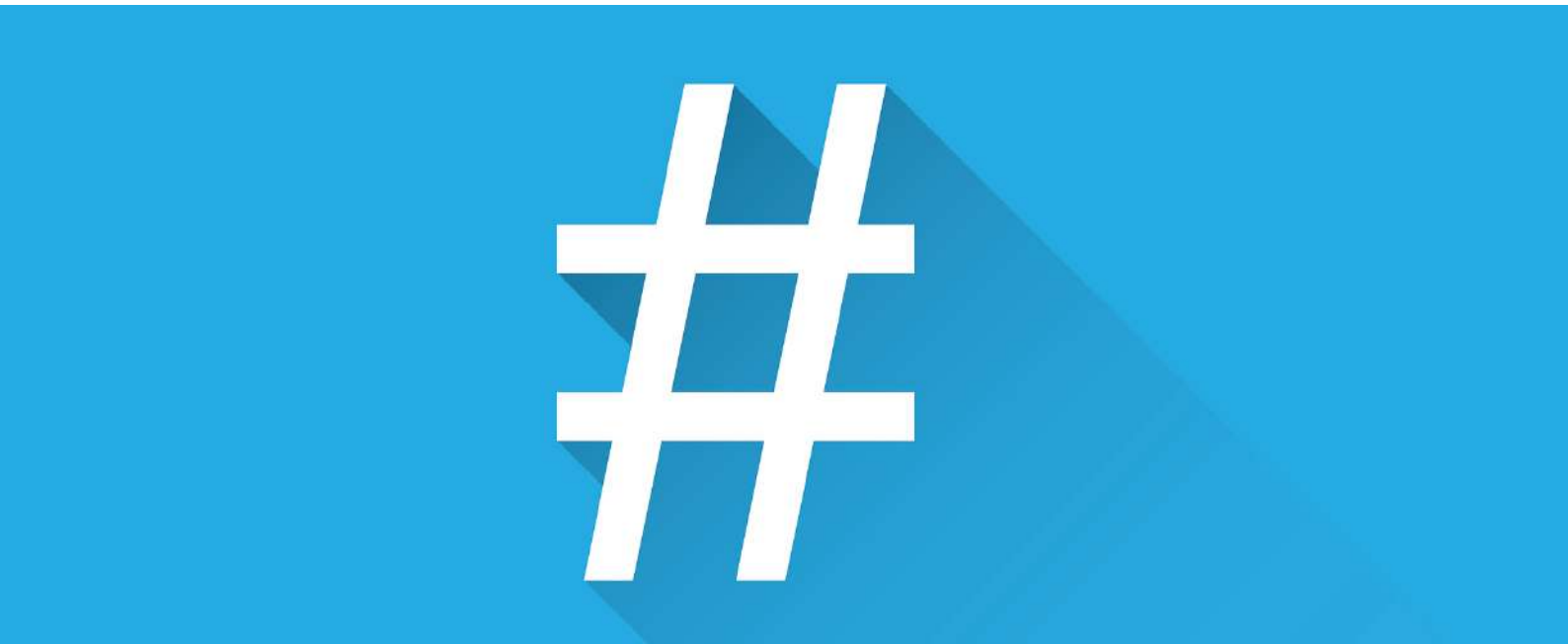
I wanted to look into this a little further, so in the Instagram app I searched #ddlg. When you do this, Instagram will also come up with other variations to help you find other hashtags, posts and accounts.

As you can see below, this screenshot is a small number of the hashtag variations recommended to me bu Instagram.

This goes to show the scale of the issues when social media companies try to do the right thing but the problem is far bigger. It's easy to blame the tech company and say they should be doing more (I agree) but what we really need to know is why a small number of teenagers are doing this because for those that are, many will be receiving contact from adult men.

It can be very easy to say that teenagers should know better, they shouldn't be doing this and they're putting themselves at risk, but remember that the very nature of adolescence is to take risks, and some teen behaviour will be much riskier than others for a whole variety of reasons. We don't want to victim blame, we need to steer them back onto the correct path.





E-safety champion Henry Platten is on a mission to make the internet a safer place for children. In this issue of Ditto magazine, Henry discusses why it's vitally important to teach children practical, digital communication skills.

When did you last sit down and handwrite a letter? Have you substituted calling your friends with a WhatsApp group? In today's busy society, much of our verbal and written communication has been replaced by faster and more convenient digital interactions. Our lives are organised from our iPhones; from booking medical appointments to chatting with friends. So how do we go about sharing this experience of communicating in the modern online world with our children?

Understanding digital interactions and learning how to be a good digital citizen is of growing importance for young people today. And like any life skill, learning how to interact digitally is something which needs to be demonstrated, discussed and practiced.

Of course, internet access, and specifically use of mainstream social media, is a topic very close to many parents' hearts. Our kids want to chat online with their friends, communicate and create content, just as they see parents, elder siblings and potentially friends doing. So integral in our society is this 'new' form of communication, that digital citizenship has fast become a fundamental part of modern education.

Through my role as an e-safety ambassador I am all too familiar with the pull of social media felt by our children. And, of course, the news

is quick to report the downsides of social media use in children. The latest research from the NSPCC in their document How Safe are our Children (2018), revealed that 23% of 8-11-year olds have one or more social media accounts. Further information from UKCCIS and Ofcom (2018) highlights that 12% of 12 to 15-year-olds have experienced cyberbullying. I recently discovered that 11 days are lost each year in classroom teaching dealing with social media issues.

In 2012 I launched eCadets; a successful pupil-led online safety education programme. With a view to creating a safe online space for children, families and teachers to enjoy creating digital content and interacting with friends, in 2015 I founded the child-safe social media experience, GoBubble. My mission was to establish a platform which offers a welcome balance; where children can benefit from the upsides of social media and parents/teachers don't have to worry about the prevalence of online safety issues.

After a fantastic response with schools doing the beta testing and many thousands of schools and users later, I am proud to say that GoBubble is making a real difference in the lives of kids, teachers and families every day. We have been able to offer an online space that is 100% safe, accessible and fun to use. And pivotally, we have designed GoBubble to be utilised by schools across the globe, as a

'Freemium' platform; which means it's free to register with optional upgrade.

Through our outreach programme we can see the evolution of tomorrow's digital citizens; users who are learning how to interact online. Our users value kindness, empathy and community. They can express themselves, communicate with their peers and explore and experiment with digital awareness; valuable skills which they will take with them into their online lives as teenagers and adults.

In addition to decreasing cyber-bullying, feedback from many of the educators who have implemented GoBubble, is an overall impact of positivity within their classrooms; supporting the development of online communities, inspiring creativity, encouraging writing skills and supporting many aspects of the curriculum.

Ian Rockey is the headteacher at Westwood with Iford Primary School in Bradford on Avon. He has found that GoBubble has supported students in understanding more about the world around them, and expanded communication horizons. Here's what he had to say:

"At Westwood with Iford Primary School we have been using GoBubble to successfully collaborate with peers and professionals around the globe.

"As a village primary school, we are always keen to enhance the children's internationalism and appreciation of the world around them and GoBubble provides the perfect safe, secure platform with which to communicate, share ideas and celebrate experiences.

"Through GoBubble we can teach children to think before they post in order to become good digital citizens and to keep themselves

safe online. This is crucial in an age when social media has become such a powerful medium. Our children have found this both an engaging and exciting way to learn. It has clearly impacted on their understanding of how important it is to communicate online in a respectful and safe way, and we are looking forward to another year of collaboration and communication online through GoBubble."

Tilly O'Brien is a teacher at Hollickwood Primary School in London. She's proactive in nurturing a positive example of digital citizenship in her school and started to use GoBubble to support her ethos in April 2019. Here's what she had to say:

"GoBubble has made a huge impact at our school. It's definitely a platform where our children feel safe.

"Since we introduced GoBubble we have seen a reduction in students using Snapchat, WhatsApp and other mainstream social networking sites. And, because GoBubble users are rewarded for the positive interactions they make, we have seen lots of the children giving each other 'likes', paying each other compliments and generally acting with kindness and sensitivity.

"Our users quickly learnt that they are responsible for the content they post. It's preparing them for future interactions whilst giving them more time to be children.

"Our families have certainly seen the positives of GoBubble, and the children enjoy using it too; I would definitely encourage other schools to sign up."

The Technology

GoBubble uses a unique form of AI powered moderation to remove any problematic content before it appears. Unlike others, we have developed the site to screen both written and video content prior to posting; so, there's definitively no chance that inappropriate content will appear. This exclusive feature relating to video content is something which the wider industry has struggled with.

Consequently, we are in talks with other developers to make our technology available and help them to keep their sites safe too.

The Background

The inspiration for GoBubble was born out of my personal passion to make the internet a safer place for children. As a former police sergeant, I have an understanding of issues surrounding child protection. My wife and business partner Danielle has a background in online safety and is a former Twitter safety advisor. Together we are passionate about solving contact and consent issues surrounding children's online safety.

The Future

Our user base is growing steadily and we're proud to say that GoBubble is now in over half of US states and 24 countries. We're working globally with Teacher Ambassadors to spread the word about the positive impact of our site and we've been invited to speak at key ed-tech conferences around the world. We're continuing development of the site's technology and collaborating with some exciting companies; all of which we hope will enable us to offer our service to more users. Ultimately, we're helping to create the digital citizens of tomorrow.

Sign up your school at:

https://www.gobubble.school/

Find Henry tweeting @Henry_Platten

DOING IT TOGETHER

internet matters.org

Internet Matters - Gaming Advice Hub

Gaming is a huge area and it can be easy for parents to become overwhelmed with all the games, age restrictions, content and so much more. Add into the mix screen time, playing the games on different devices, the fact that many games can connect your children with anybody around the world it can become a full time job all on its own.

But fear not. Internet Matters has a brand new gaming hub to support parents which gives advice to explain and understand the world of online gaming and encourage children to game safely and responsibly online.

There is a lot of information on the website such as:

- The Risks - learn how to protect your child from potential risks of online gaming.
- The Benefits - see how gaming can benefit your child's development and future prospects.
- The Resources - a list of recommended resources to help children get the best out of online gaming.
- And much more.

This is a really valuable resource for parents with plenty of useful snippets of information you can read through whilst sitting down with a cup of your

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

I'm quite often asked what the best resources for parents are. Not an easy question to answer as it would depend on what your concerns are, your level of knowledge, or a particular risk that you would like more information on.

I have listed below 4 of what I believe to be the best, current and up to date resources.

Common Sense Media
To learn more about the games or apps your children are using, Common Sense Media covers thousands, which includes advice and reviews from other parents:

Internet Matters
Tons of age-specific related information created specifically for parents. Includes information to set up devices.

YouTube
With over 5.5 billion videos, if you need to know something there's a good chance it's here. Use simple searches such as, "What is…" "How do I…"

School
The school your child goes to is a wealth of information. If you're not sure or don't know where to turn to, they can and will help. Find out what what your child does in school about online safety

Contribute to the magazine

I'm always on the lookout for great content to share with schools and parents, but I also know that people have their own individual stories to tell. This information can be hugely beneficial for everybody.

- Are you a parent who has experienced something with your child? What was it and what did you do? Has your child experienced something and would he/she like to share their advice with others?

- Are you a school that has experienced a series of incidents? How did you tackle this? Do you have an innovative way to engage with specific online safety topics in the school?

- Do you have an opinion or a thought-provoking idea?

Drop me an email and let me know your thoughts. Everything can be kept anonymous if you wish.

Alan Mackenzie

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