

Safer Internet Day is 9th February Fewer than half of young people follow e-safety guidelines

3348 young people speak out about e-safety education and cyber abuse.

Despite great strides in delivering good quality e-safety education to children and young people, only 43% always act on what they've learned.

Delivery is good -

- 87% of young people had received e-safety education from school
- 67% had received e-safety education from parents

92% rated the quality of the e-safety education as quite or very good and it was generally thought to have been given at the right time by 82%.

But do they follow it?

Despite this near universal approval, just 43% said that they *always* followed the guidelines, leaving a majority who at least occasionally do not follow what they have been taught. A hard core of 12% do *not really* or *never* follow these guidelines while as many as 46% only *sometimes* do so. This leaves them vulnerable at other times.

These findings vary according to age and as many as 19% of 14-15 year olds, almost one in five, do *not really* or *never* follow the guidelines they have been taught to keep safe online. Only 29% of this age group say they *always* do so.

Do blocks work?

Where adults set up blocks to keep children from certain websites, success is questionable. 36% try to get round blocks at least occasionally and 6% have either a friend or sibling who gets past blocks.

Access to new technology without an adult is widespread from the age of 10.

'This makes it vital that young people are aware and skilled in staying safe online and on their mobiles or games. But it is not enough for them to know it. We need to learn how to prompt them to change their behaviour' said Adrienne Katz, director of Youthworks, who carried out the survey.

Online abuse

48% of respondents had experienced at least one form of cyber abuse online.

Mobile phone abuse

28% of respondents had experienced at least one form of phone abuse. Their experiences included a variety of ingenious, manipulative or humiliating messages, sometimes including images. Some messages demonstrated the total lack of inhibition shown by the sender shielded by this indirect medium.

Getting help

Fewer than half told someone and got help (48%)
37% said the abuse made them upset and angry while 22% were 'not bothered,' possibly because they chose to take this stance or were desensitised to the language and shock value of the message content.

Editors' notes

About the survey

The survey was undertaken by Youthworks in the autumn term of 2009 in The Midlands. The sample is made up of 3348 young people, 53% female, 47% male, plus 29 people who did not answer this question. Ages 10 -15 comprised the bulk of the responses, with the highest number coming from the 12 -13 age group (40%).

About access

92% have a mobile phone and 89% have a computer they can use on their own at home without an adult. Children and young people are increasingly able to access the internet without help or supervision from adults, through their mobile phones, computers and games consoles. Further independent access is on hand in clubs, libraries, cafes or friends' homes.

Social Networking is popular with over two thirds of all the young people and more than three quarters of the girls.

Types of cyberbullying online

Gender and age patterns tell us that it will be vital to address the needs of girls and boys with a more nuanced approach when addressing cyberbullying. Girls are markedly more likely than boys to experience 'people talking about you nastily online' (43% vs. 28%). Girls also receive more messages with unwanted sexual suggestions, jokes or threats (29% vs. 25%) and messages from strangers asking to meet up (32% vs.22%).

Boys on the other hand are more likely to receive a message 'with insults calling you gay' (35% vs. 24%). Boys are also more likely to receive a message that tries to 'make you do something you don't want to do.' (33% vs. 27%).

There is a large increase at age 14 -15 in most of the types of abusive message. The peak age for unwanted sexual jokes and threats is 14 -17. However one or two types of message were frequently experienced by the youngest age group (10-11) including racist comments and 'messages that showed people were talking about you nastily online.'

Worryingly, over a third of the ten and eleven year olds had received a message 'trying to make you do something you did not want to do'. One in five had received a message with unwanted sexual suggestions, jokes or threats and 31% had received homophobic insults. More than one in five had received a message from a stranger suggesting they meet up.

Types of Cyberbullying on mobiles

Similar gender differences to those described in online abuse were found in reports of mobile phone bullying. For example, boys are almost twice as likely to experience homophobic bullying as girls (36% vs. 19%). Girls were more likely to suffer name calling by text (57% vs.45%) and to have humiliating photos of them sent to others (22% vs.17%).

More than one in four of 10 -11 year olds report cyberbullying carried on from their lives in school. Deliberately making and changing social arrangements in order to humiliate or exclude the target child appears to be fairly common among all age groups..

About Youthworks

Youthworks is a consultancy working to explore the views of children and young people to improve practice. Led by Adrienne Katz, an author and project manager of various anti-bullying programmes since 1999, Youthworks evaluates services for young people and contributes information to policy makers and front line workers.

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