#DITTO

STAY SAFE ● HAVE FUN ● REPEAT

EDITION 23 - JANUARY 2021

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Foreword from Alan Mackenzie

Welcome to Edition 23 of #DITTO

It seems like such a long time since I last put out an edition of DITTO. I'm not going to mention why, if you're anything like me I'm sick and tired of hearing/talking about it.

It has been a busy time but as with many others I've had a little downtime as well which has allowed me to do some personal projects. Not DIY I would hasten to add, there's no way my wife would allow that - there's only so much you can learn from YouTube! But if you're a regular reader you'll know I love my photography and a big part of that is Photoshop. So I have used a little time to brush up and learn a few new Photoshop skills. I've got a looong way to go yet!

I thought I would share a couple of images with you, for no other reason that just because. The first image on the next page was taken in the Scottish Highlands, Glen Etive. It's a shot I have been after for years of a stag in the woodland looking straight at me. The second was a simple snapshot of an otter in a zoo. I've tried to apply more of a fine-art look and overall I'm quite pleased, so much so that they are now both printed out in A3 format and take pride of place on my office wall.

Talking of using lockdown for other things, I spoke to some Year 5 and 6 children a few weeks ago who had used their time during the first lockdown to get their follower account above 1,000 followers. Why? Because at that point you can go live. Now that's very interesting and worth talking to your children about.

Lots to share with you this month, I hope you enjoy this edition of DITTO.

Alan



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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Influencers

YouTube is huge with children, but with over 5 billion videos on YouTube (and that number growing at a staggering pace) we can understand the potential for children to see the very best and worst of society.

But increasingly we're seeing a rise in so-called influencers, usually described as somebody who has established credibility in a specific industry or genre, e.g. make-up, toys, gaming etc. Many of these influencers are genuine, down to earth people who simply want to share good advice and make an honest living. However, for us parents the clue is in the name, influencer; a person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product by promoting or recommending items. Equally it may be to influence a behaviour or carry out a challenge. As with anything like this there are the good, the not so good, and those that wish to exploit children.

Commonly when speaking with children, the most-watched genres of videos tend to be how-to's, gaming, challenges and general fun videos such as 'try not to laugh'. But also, videos about their hobbies such as slime, horse riding, gymnastics and much more.

These influencers are aware of this and will target children with the most popular genres in order to increase engagement such as views, likes, comments and ultimately subscribers. The purpose is simple, more engagement means more ad revenue and potentially revenue from sponsors for things such as product placement, mentions, reviews etc. and whilst the various social media outlets require channels to be clear when something is being advertised, the reality is that many of these influencers don't make it clear.

This is an understandable concern for parents, however in my experience speaking with children, they're pretty clued up when it comes to this form of advertising, often using statements such as, "They're just trying to sell their merch (meaning merchandise)."

As time moves on and technology evolves, so does the way in which that technology is being used, for example AI (artificial intelligence) and CGI (computer generated imagery). You may have heard of the increasing concerns over deepfakes, where images of individuals (usually female celebrities) are mapped onto the face of an adult (sexual) performer. These videos are concerningly realistic, it's very difficult to tell that they are fake.

But within CGI we're also seeing a rise in fake influencers too. For example, take a look at 'Lil Miquela' on YouTube or Instagram where she (it?) has 1.6 million followers. It isn't difficult to see that Miquela is computer generated. You may be forgiven for thinking the images are of a real person and filters have been a little over-used, but the videos clearly show that it's CGI. What's more, advertising agencies are using the likes of Lil Miquela to 'influence' their products.

You might be asking why use CGI? I'm sure there are many reasons (e.g. you don't have to pay a real influencer), but cartoons have always been used in the past to engage with children and young people, this just seems to be a modern

version of that, albeit a much more realistic version, so you may be wondering, “how do I teach my child what is real and what isn’t or virtual?”.

It all comes down to critical thinking, the same logic we apply into any area of our lives; we ask ourselves simple questions, such as:

- What is the purpose of this image/video?
- What are they trying to do, or influence me with?
- Why are they talking about this product?

YouTube can be an amazing platform for children and the newer version of YouTube Kids (for children 12 and under) gives parents much more granular control over what children are seeing, but we can’t take our eye off the ball as there is always the potential for something unsavoury, whether that is inappropriate content or people (real or virtual) trying to influence the children to say, do or buy something. Be pro-active with your children:

- Watch a few of their favourite channels with them and discuss why they favour those channels. Talk to them about critical thinking using simple questions such as those above.
- If they are using YouTube to view videos about their hobbies, search together and discuss why you feel certain videos or channels may be inappropriate. Children need to know what the boundaries are, and they will only know if you tell them.
- Browse through their YouTube history every now and again just to satisfy yourself that nothing is untoward.
- Let them know to come to you if something isn’t right; that they won’t be judged or have their device removed from them.

If you don’t know your way around YouTube, such as looking at history, subscribed channels etc. you may wish to take a look at the video below which I put together mid last year.

AACOSS

The Association of Adult and Child Online Safety Specialists





Groundbreaking Principles to Keep Children Safe Online

At the beginning of March 2020 five countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and USA) agreed a set of 11 principles (or actions) to ensure children are not sexually exploited on their platforms. These principles were written alongside technology companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, Google, Twitter, Snap (Snapchat) and Roblox.

This is timely, yet it's also a little frustrating at the same time.

Timely: the scale of child sexual abuse (CSA) images is increasing. In 2019 the tech industry reported 69 million CSA images and videos, which is a 50% increase in just 12 months!

The scale of this is unimaginable and horrific; in the UK alone the National Crime Agency and UK police arrest around 500 offenders a month and safeguard around 700 children each month. So much more needs to be done about this and in particular, the police need more resources (money, investigators, upskilling etc.).

Frustrating: have a look at the 11 principles on the next page and draw your own conclusion. I find it frustrating because of the language being used, such as ‘groundbreaking’ and ‘first of its kind’. It’s neither in my opinion. Isn't this already happening? If not, why not? None of this is rocket science. Tech companies should have been doing this a long time ago.

Don't get me wrong, I have a positive outlook on this but I’m continually frustrated at how slowly government and tech companies work. Voluntary codes of practice have been proven time and time again to not be worth the paper they're written on.

Prevent child sexual abuse material

Companies will seek to prevent known CSA material being made available to users or accessible on their platforms.

Companies to seek to identify and combat the dissemination of new CSA material.

Target online grooming and preparatory behaviour

Companies to seek to identify and combat preparatory CSA activity (e.g. grooming).

Companies to seek to identify and combat advertising, recruiting, soliciting a child for CSA.

Target livestreaming

Companies to seek to identify and combat the use of live-streaming services for the purpose of CSA.

Search

Companies seek to prevent search results from surfacing CSA and seek to prevent automatic suggestions for such activity.

Specialised approach for children

Companies seek to adopt enhanced safety measures with the aim of protecting children from peers or adults seeking to engage in harmful sexual activity with children.

Victim/survivor consideration

Companies seek to take appropriate action on material that may not be illegal on its face, but with appropriate context and confirmation may be connected to CSA.

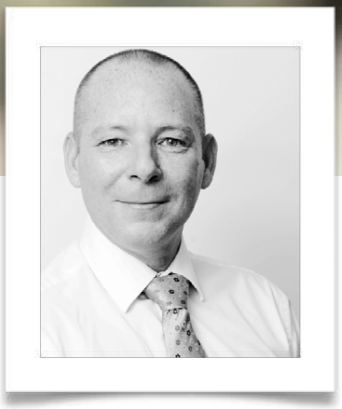
Collaborate & respond to evolving threat

Companies seek to take an informed global approach to combating online CSA and to take into account the evolving threat landscape as part of their design and development processes.

Companies support opportunities to share relevant expertise, helpful practices, data and tools.

Companies seek to regularly publish or share meaningful data and insights on their efforts to combat CSA.





Family Safety Mode and Screentime Management

TikTok has been around for a while now and most people are aware of it, yet it is one of the (if not 'the) fastest growing social media platforms around the world and is essentially a subculture allowing users to create short videos with music and filters to express themselves creatively. If you've had a look at TikTok you can see how easy it is to be drawn into it and why many would describe it as addictive (in the loose sense of the word).

To understand the scale of TikTok, it has been downloaded over 1.5 billion times in the Apple App Store and the Google Play store. It has over 500 million active users (of which 150 million active daily users are in China and use the Chinese version of the app called Douyin).

With that scale of user and content you can see that there are going to be some pretty significant concerns which I've written about in the past in this magazine.

To be fair to TikTok they do seem to act fairly quickly to wide scale concerns and criticism and there are some good features within the app to help you as a parent or carer:

Family Safety Mode

Early in February 2020 TikTok introduced a new feature, Family Safety Mode, which it refers to as 'digital wellbeing' features. Family Safety Mode allows a parent to link their TikTok account to their childs account. Once enabled parents will be able to manage the digital wellbeing features, which are:

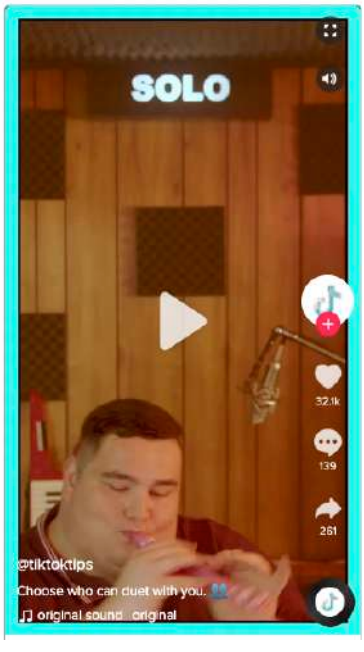
- **Screen time management** - control how long your child can spend on TikTok each day.
- **Direct messages** - limit who can send messages to the connected account or turn DM's off completely.
- **Restricted mode** - restrict the appearance of content that may not be appropriate for all audiences.

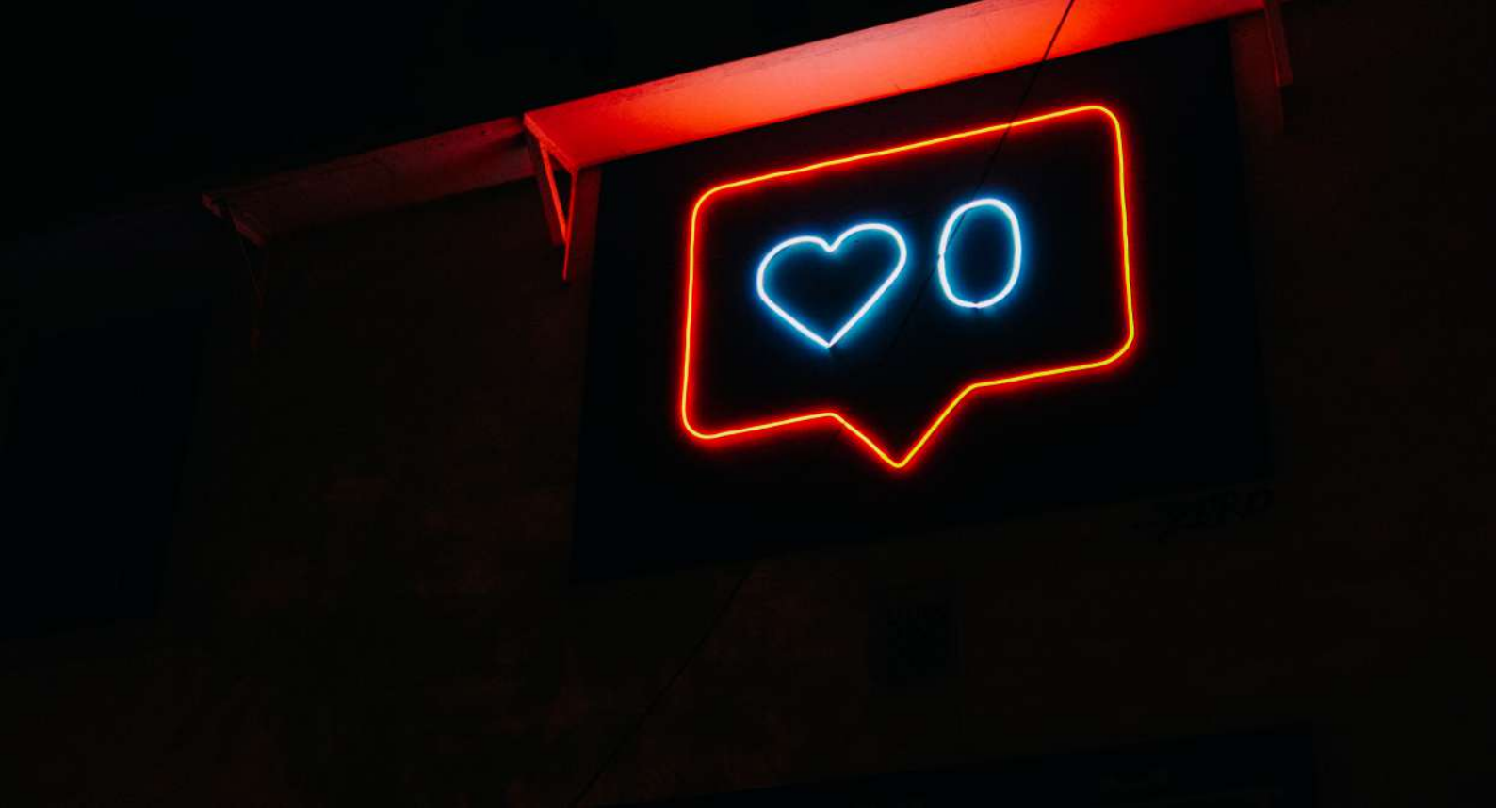
How to enable Family Safety Mode

1. To enable Family Safety Mode you first of all need to have the TikTok app on your (parent/carer) device and be logged in to your account.
2. At the top right you will see 3 dots. Tap on these which will take you into the Privacy and Settings menu.
3. Scroll down to Digital Wellbeing and tap, you will be presented with the 3 options.
4. Firstly, tap on Family Safety Mode in order to activate the feature. Tap on parent and your child will then need to scan the QR code in order to link the two accounts.
5. You can now activate the screen time management feature, where you can manage the amount of screen time you allow (40, 60, 90 and 120 minutes). You will then set a password which prevents your child going over their allocated time.
6. Once this is done I would recommend you activate Restricted Mode which is a feature to prevent your child seeing inappropriate content. However I have yet to come across a restricted mode on any app or service (e.g. YouTube) which is good. I recommend you activate Restricted Mode, but don't be lulled into a false sense of security and safety.
7. I would also recommend you limit who can send messages to the connected account or turn off Direct Messaging completely and also ensure your childs account is set to Private.

TikTok has a number of short videos on their Resource Centre which can be really useful for you and your child, such as 'choose who can duet with you', reporting inappropriate behaviour', 'blocking a user' and many more. Well worth a look if you're new to this:

http://bit.ly/tiksafety





What is Like-Farming?

"The use of bogus pages on social media designed to artificially increase popularity by tricking users into liking the page/post."

Like-Farming is something commonly seen on Facebook, but you can see it happening on plenty of other social media apps.

It is the process of deceiving users with the aim to get them to like, share or comment on a post in order for that post to go viral. Commonly posts will play on our heartstrings, e.g. posting an image of an animal suffering, e.g. a starving donkey, and the text reads, "Animals suffering all over the world, I bet this doesn't get a single like."

Other examples might be:

- Like and share this post to win a weekend away.
- 90% of people will fail this test.
- Combine the month your were born in and the last thing you bought to find your vixen name (or variations).
- Only true friends will respond to this post.

These are very simple social engineering tactics such as concern, empathy, urgency and even curiosity and there a number of reasons you might want a post to go viral, for example:

- Accumulate more followers, therefore bigger target audience (e.g. customers) where you will be signposted to marketing websites where the original poster gets paid by the amount of new visitors.
- Criminal activity - similar to the above, but this time with the intent of luring you to sites that deceive you into revealing personal information, such as usernames, email addresses and passwords.

Advice

Use your gut instinct.
Check the page, is it legitimate? Is it new? Are there any terms and conditions? Are there any contact details?
Don't click on any links.
Do your research by visiting the **HOAX SLAYER** website.

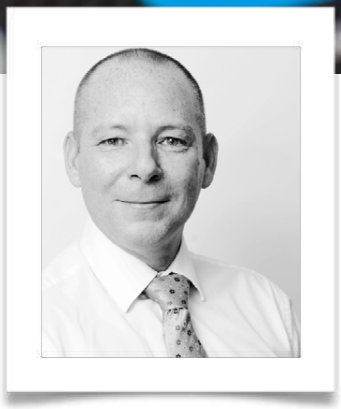


NOTIFICATIONS

Note: I originally wrote this article back in March 2020.

A few months ago I was in a school talking to some Y6 children (approx. 60) and something one of the children said led me to ask the question, “How many notifications do you get on your phone, on average, per day?”.

I was taken aback, the majority of these children received hundreds of notifications with the upper amount being about 600. To put things into perspective, the children at this school (both prep and senior) predominantly used WhatsApp as a means of communication and the students had set up lots of WhatsApp groups for various activities, year groups, class groups, social groups etc.



But what was striking was that many of the children stated that they found it frustrating getting so many messages, most of which were nothing to do with them, some from groups that they had been invited into but didn’t want to be a part of and were then concerned about leaving due to what the others in the group may say behind their back and the fact that lots of messages were received when they were asleep.

One of the standard pieces of advice we give to children and young people is to turn off all notifications at night or simply don’t keep your phone/device in the bedroom at nighttime. However I knew this advice would be pointless for these children because they would simply state, quite correctly, that all the messages would still be there in the morning.

The advice is helpful, but only partially. This got me thinking:

- Is this common?
- Are children experiencing anxiety due to the amount of notifications they get?

I tried looking around for some academic research on this but I couldn't find anything close (if you know of any research please let me know). So I decided to ask all the schools that receive DITTO to ask their students.

Around 20 schools responded and I'm very grateful to those schools for taking time out of their busy schedules. I'll share some of the results with you in the following pages but I need to make a couple of things clear:

- I'm not a scientist, this is not research.
- The numbers are small, you cannot draw assumptions and you definitely can't draw conclusions.
- But, it definitely begs the question whether research would be useful in this area, in particular to determine those children who may be anxious and how to help them.

I initially thought that there would be some commonality to make things a little easier, but there was no commonality at all, which in itself is interesting. So instead of creating some simple bar charts or graphs to show you I have highlighted the results from some of the schools covering a number of different year groups.

This would be an interesting exercise to carry out in the classroom, for example one Y5 teacher emailed me to say they had a class discussion for 45 minutes about this and found it really useful. It helped her to identify a child in the class that is not always switched on because they're being woken up during the night. Some of the children didn't know how to turn on/off notifications and they all decided to try and switch phones off or switch to silent every night.

For parents - see Doing It Together at the end of the magazine.



Secondary

Year 7 - 27 students

All use WhatsApp. They are in approx. 15 group chats each (one group has 146 students in).
200-1000 notifications per day, higher in the holidays.
25% feel anxious.
Many state it is pointless leaving the group as they just get added in again.

Year 8 - 30 students

12 pupils get 10 or less notifications per day.
18 get 50-300 notifications per day.
5 feel anxious.

Year 9 - 29 students

Notifications are mainly from Snapchat, 50-200 per day.
One girl had 139 Snapchat notifications during the course of one lesson.

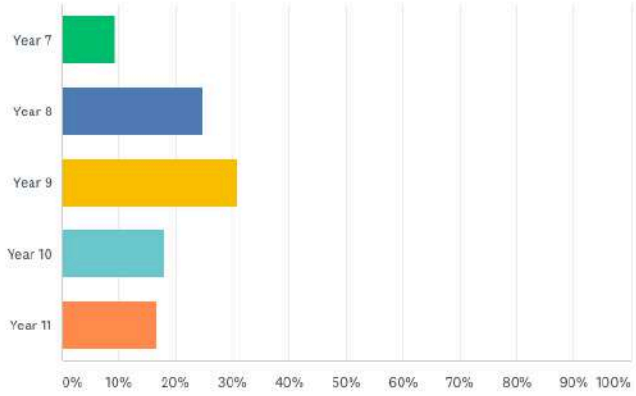
One secondary school set up a Survey Monkey to poll the students. This is a service where you can carry out a poll online and the results are automatically compiled into some nice graphics. I've shared these on the following pages.

Secondary

Q1

What year group are you?

Answered: 161 Skipped: 1

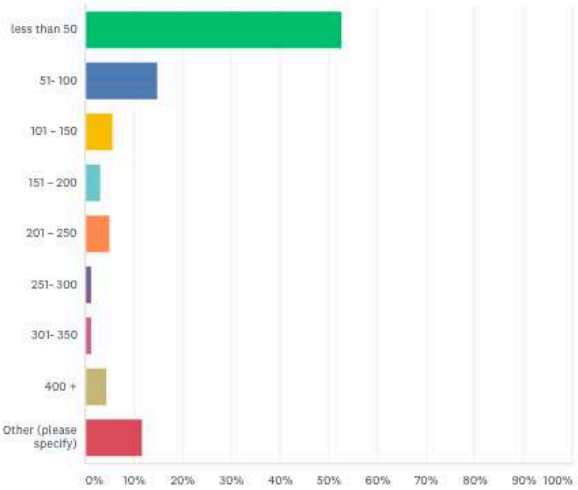


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Year 7	9.32%	15
Year 8	24.84%	40
Year 9	31.06%	50
Year 10	18.01%	29
Year 11	16.77%	27
TOTAL		161

Q2

When you wake up in the morning, on average how many notifications (all) are waiting for you?

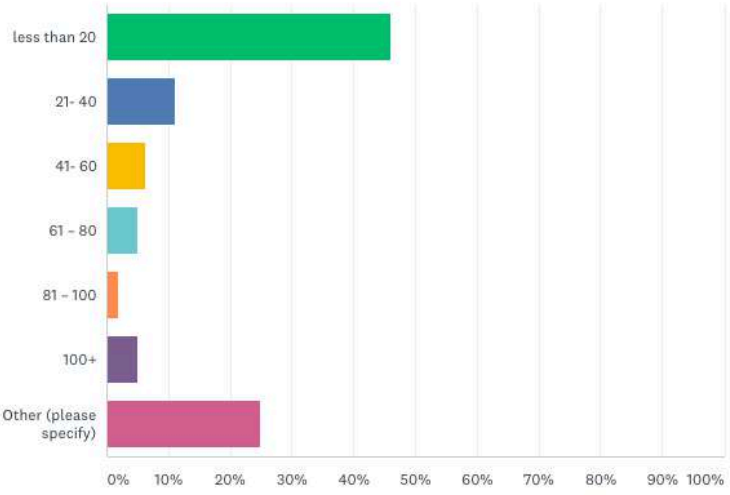
Answered: 161 Skipped: 1



Q3

How many of these are WhatsAPP notifications?

Answered: 161 Skipped: 1

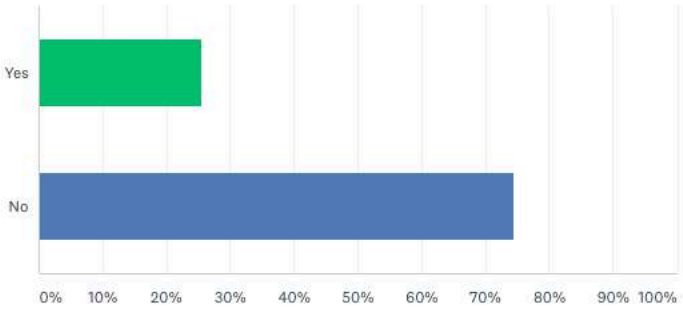


Secondary

Q4

If you wake up in the night do you check your phone for messages?

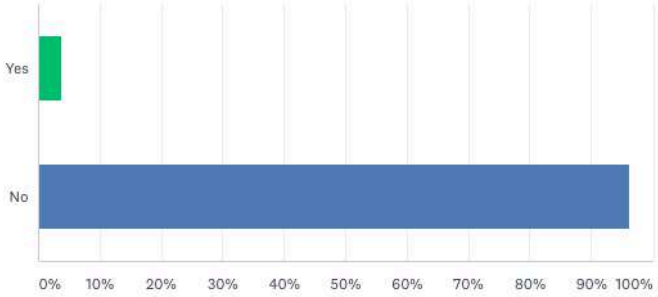
Answered: 160 Skipped: 2



Q5

Do you wake up at night because of the notifications?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 0

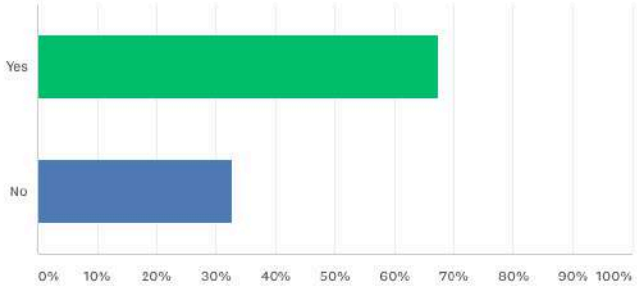


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	3.70%	6
No	96.30%	156
TOTAL		162

Q6

Do you keep you your phone in your bedroom at night?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 0



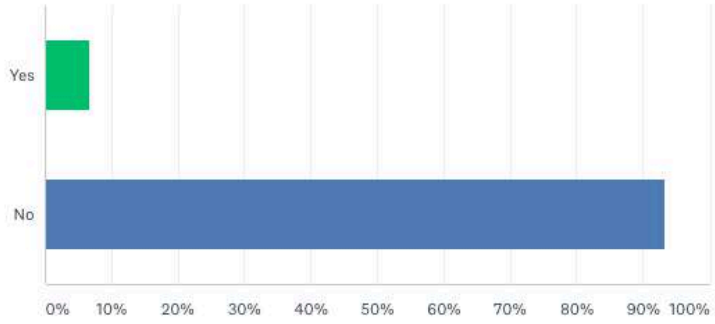
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	67.28%	109
No	32.72%	53
TOTAL		162

Secondary

Q8

Do the amount of notifications make you feel anxious?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 0

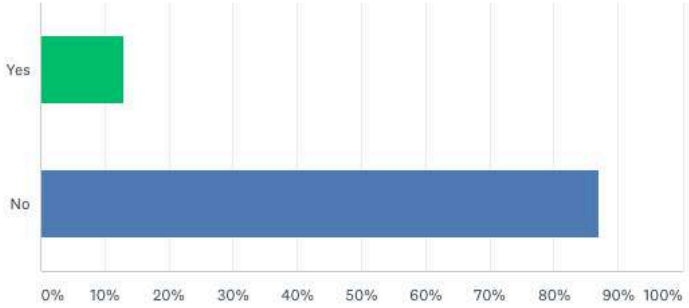


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	6.79%	11
No	93.21%	151
TOTAL		162

Q9

Do you feel pressure to respond to messages immediately?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 0

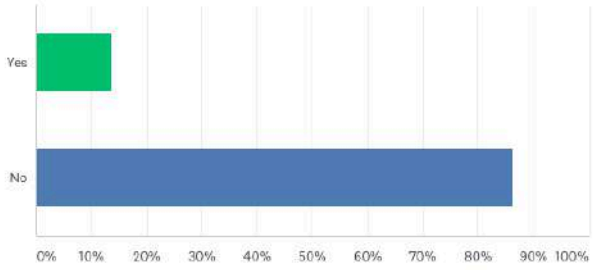


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	12.96%	21
No	87.04%	141
TOTAL		162

Q10

Have you ever felt worried about leaving a WhatApp group in fear of what others will say about you?

Answered: 161 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13.66%	22
No	86.34%	139
TOTAL		161

Primary

Year 3 - students (unknown number)

Average 13 notifications per day (WhatsApp).
Average 11 notifications waiting in the morning.
Two children feel anxious.
5 get woken up by notifications.

Year 5 - students (unknown number)

Average notifications up to 30 a day (WhatsApp).
Between 6 and 100 notifications waiting in the morning.
A few children feel anxious.

Year 5/6 - 25 students (small village school)

Many children in WhatsApp group chats. Not that interested as “people just talk a lot of rubbish.”
Notifications anywhere between 30 and 100 after a short time away from their phone.
Don’t feel pressure to participate in groups.
Not losing sleep as they don’t keep devices in the bedroom at night.

Year 6 - students (unknown number)

Average 45 notifications per day.
There can be up to 100 notifications waiting in the morning.
12 children get woken up in the night, 8 of these feel that they have to answer.

Year 6 - 30 students

8 children get 10 or more notifications per day.
Most get anxious (if they don’t know the person).
One girl gets newsflashes (presumably from a news app) which can make her anxious if it is something bad or sad.



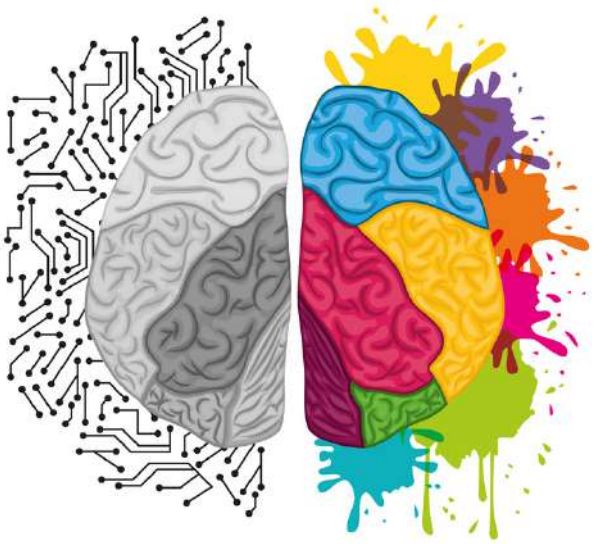
So can we draw any conclusions from the results? No we can't. If you read through all the figures you can see that they are all over the place, but I would like to make a couple of observations:

Screentime - there are lots of concerns and complaints about children and young people spending too much time on devices. There is an argument here, however consider some of the results you have seen on the previous pages. Most schools do not allow phones to be used in school, so if you have got 100's of notifications coming through you're going to be glued to your device when you get home. In one small measure, this isn't children choosing to go on their devices, they are being 'triggered', perhaps compelled, due to notifications.

Turn off your phone at night - this is good advice for anybody, but it doesn't help with all the notifications that are coming in overnight, waiting for your attention first thing in the morning. I have no answer to this; I'm going to try and speak to some people to see if we can collaborate and come up with better, more realistic advice.

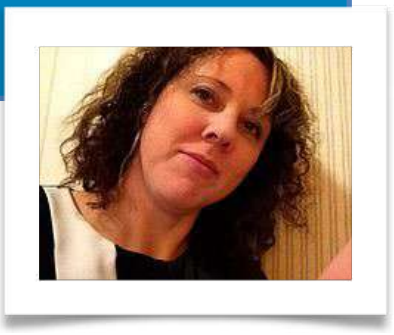
Anxiety - it was good to see how few children felt anxious, I thought it was going to be the opposite, but it did get me thinking. When I get lots of notifications I do, sometimes, get anxious, particularly if I'm busy or doing something. Even angry at times. Are we seeing an evolved level of resilience with children where notifications have become 'normalised' in their lives? Equally, for those children who do feel anxious, why are they feeling this way and what can we do to help them?

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
Twitter: @nibzy



Dear Teachers and Parents.

It has been a while since I last wrote for Alan and DITTO as lockdown number one meant that I was inundated with issues of all kinds related to the digital and cyberspace. I wanted to write so much about the last year and some of the things that have happened in terms of online safety and cybertrauma. There were so many things that cropped up in so many ways.

I managed to take some time during the year to complete my book on human development and technology and this will be published this year with a well-respected publisher called Routledge. This book is for you, the parent and the professional and I hope it can be as helpful to you as to when I work with and speak to my clients and parents in therapy

Then we started 2021 and my focus shifted somewhat for this article. I wanted to share something precious with you from two angles. One is from me directly and the other is from my clients who, throughout 2020, shared some amazing gems, conversations and praise. I wanted to bring that to you.

Now in doing this I have to change some identifying details, but the words are ones spoken directly, or drawn, or played out during online sessions. This covers children as young as 5, children at university and parents/carers whom I work with alongside the children.

Firstly, I wanted to say you are amazing. Parenting doesn't come with a manual and neither does teaching or assisting educators, coaches or being there for the other parents as a friend in crisis and confusion (and boy have the tiers and tears been confusing). I wanted to share my gratitude, amazement and overall admiration for the new you that you find yourself becoming. School work is hard for children, schoolwork is

difficult to teach and schoolwork can be a place of discord, tears and feeling like a failure at times for everyone involved. I have heard so many good stories that I wanted to share those because sometimes we need to hear how good we really are. So here are four examples of this;

Lucy aged 5: Mrs T is funny; she does some dancing with us and then we have to copy her. It's my favourite lesson. (CHILD IS BEAMING AND DANCING AT THIS POINT)

Tommy aged 11: "I actually went in the lift (with a friend) when I wasn't supposed to and Mr H said we should get to lesson after this and said he would do the same when he was here at this school. He told us that right now the important thing was to look after each other and be kind. He wasn't going to tell on us because there were big things that teachers were busy with, like making sure the school was safe from Corona and not to use the lift again as it wasn't for students".

I asked about the confined space and mask wearing in school and Tommy replied:

"I didn't think he would know it was us cos we were wearing masks, but he did!"

Tommy thought it was good that Mr H was thinking about everybody.

Suzie aged 18 (at Uni): "Well I suppose it could be boring and we have our cameras turned off but the lecturer always asks us about home at the start of a lesson as we are stuck here in the rooms, it's nice and I like that she asks. I call my mum on FaceTime afterwards. I miss her and can't wait to go home at Christmas. Its so boring here and you can only go out for sausage rolls and sandwiches"

George aged 16: "I thought I would play games instead of listening but actually Mrs L has been really good. She has brought some really good things for us to look at for the lesson (Geography) and it's been interesting. I thought this was gonna be easy at home, but I get that she is doing loads to entertain us."

I asked what the things were, and it seems the teacher was showing artefacts from around the world (or ornaments as they were described)

And what about the home schooling parents? (section shortened to fit in the magazine)

The resounding reflections from all the young people have been that the new home 'teachers' are good, doing their best but you know what? They are not the teachers in the classrooms!

Parents you are doing a great job at parenting, however we really do have to hand it to the teachers from now on. The work they do is amazing!! They are doing so much to maintain a coherent, interesting and 'entertaining' lockdown school experience. I am glad we have the technology and I see so much of the negative side in my therapy room. I thought I would bring the moments of joy and understanding that children and young people have.

This article is to say thank you, to all of you. Teachers, coaches, assistants, support staff and parents: you are making a difference and you are in the hearts of so many children.

Warmly,

Cath

Cyber Synapse - by Cath Knibbs

A podcast for parents and professionals for cyber issues.

http://bit.ly/cysynapse



How we can help

A look at the Report Harmful Content service and how we are helping to protect 13+ year olds online.

At South West for Grid for Learning (SWGfL), we are advocating for everyone who comes across or falls victim to harmful content online, supporting them to take action. Secondary students, teachers and other education professionals are very welcome to get in touch with us through Report Harmful Content (RHC) so together we can build a safer online experience.

About us

RHC is provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre and operated by SWGfL. We are a national reporting centre that has been designed to support everyone over 13 to report harmful content online. We also offer a mediatory service in cases involving:

- Online Abuse
- Bullying or Harassment
- Threats
- Impersonation
- Unwanted Sexual Advances (Not Image Based)
- Violent Content
- Self-Harm or Suicide Content
- Pornographic Content

Harmful content

Anything online which causes a person distress or harm is considered harmful content. We mediate with industry on 8 types of harmful content based on the success we have had responding to this in the past on our other helpline services. Other kinds of harmful content online are already covered by

alternative services, and most importantly whenever the content is criminal, the police are the people to contact. In addition to our general advice on reporting, we also provide the police with links to the various reporting mechanisms available to them as law enforcement.

Our network is wide

We are also in contact with a number of other organisations: NGOs, local authorities, national agencies and government departments. We are part of a wide network and can put you in contact with the appropriate support. Within SWGfL we work alongside our sister helplines: the Professionals Online Safety Helpline and the Revenge Porn Helpline who support professionals and young people with online safety concerns and adults experiencing intimate image abuse respectively. When the content is not in our remit, we will direct our clients to the right service and support.

How does it work?

After the content is reported directly to the platform hosting it, we step in if this content isn't actioned in accordance with industry terms and conditions. We assist by acting as a mediator between clients and industry, escalating issues directly with industry and advocating for clients where necessary. Our flowchart helps to explain what we can do to help.

The content can be reported anonymously though, depending on the type of harm, there's a limit to what RHC can do to help in these situations.

How can you as an education professional help?

Although reports from teenagers are increasing through RHC,13-18 year olds are still less likely to report a problem to us than adults. For that reason, we consider it extremely important to work closely with education professionals, making sure you know we are here and how we can help support students.

Hopefully, after reading this, you can recommend us whenever appropriate so together we can support young people, helping to shape a safer internet experience.

For now, please do take a look at RHC and follow us on Twitter.

We would love to hear from you and thank you for your continued support!



— FAMILY — VIDEO GAME – DATABASE –

Andy Robertson is the editor of AskAboutGames and has written for national press and broadcast about video games and families for over 15 years. He has just published the Taming Gaming book with its Family Video Game Database.

Video games are often considered a distraction from education or something that parents and teachers need to minimise to avoid them getting out of hand. We hear lots of stories about children addicted to violent games and are understandably concerned.

However, video games are media. Like books and films and music, children need help finding an experience that is both appropriate and enjoyable to them.

Created by a small enthusiastic team of parents and carers The Family Video Game Database was set-up to help parents and teachers find games they actually want children to play. You can look up games like Grand Theft Auto or Call of Duty to check their ratings. But then get suggestions of younger rated games as an alternative for younger children.

The database also offers lists of useful games that you can filter by System, Age, Duration etc:
(Click on the yellow text to be taken straight to the web page).

- **Educational Games**
- **Walk in Someone Else's Shoes**
- **Solve a Mystery**
- **Find Calm**

The database is also backed by a hardback book **Taming Gaming** that is available in January on Amazon and elsewhere. Both have been created by journalist Andy Robertson who has worked with video games and families for over 15 years.

www.taminggaming.com

SNIPPETS

DO YOUR CHILDREN PLAY ROBLOX?

South West Grid for Learning, in collaboration with Roblox, have put together a really handy Roblox checklist covering what Roblox is, how to report abuse in the game, how to block users and more.

Download HERE

On the theme of Roblox, way back in June 2020 they released a survey of almost 3,000 children within the Roblox community which showed that parents are increasingly supportive as "teens lean on social gaming and media platforms for friend connections" during the pandemic. This included:

- No need to worry about how you look.
- Easier to make friends quickly.
- Able to discuss topics like Covid-19.

It makes for an interesting read and you can read the full article **HERE**.

PLAYING VIDEO GAMES CAN BE GOOD FOR WELLBEING

It's one of these areas that is very subjective: different people will have different opinions based on their own experiences. But studies are starting to show that playing video games can be good for wellbeing. Of course there are so many different factors involved from age to the type of game and much more, but it's good to see that more and more really good research is being carried out so that we have much better information to help our children.

You can read more about this particular study **HERE**.

DIGIDUCK STORIES (children 3-7 years old)

The original Digiduck story, Digiduck's Big Decision from Childnet, is a few years old but there are now two more editions of the popular online safety stories for young children which can be used in the classroom or by parents at home. They're all free and there is a PDF format or you can read the books online **HERE**.

ABUSE AND HARASSMENT DRIVING GIRLS OFF SOCIAL MEDIA

On the 5th October last year Plan International published the results of the largest ever global survey on online violence (14,000 girls) which showed that one in 5 girls have either left or reduced their used of social media after being harassed, whilst one in 10 have changed the way in which they express themselves on social media.

According to the study, girls are routinely subjected to explicit messages, pornographic photos, stalking and other forms of abuse. There are some concerning figures in the study and personally I find it absolutely horrifying that girls are being subjected to this.

To read the full report click **HERE**



DOING IT TOGETHER
Advice for parents

NOTIFICATIONS

As you will have read earlier in this magazine, some children are getting huge amounts of notifications on their devices, many overnight and some of these children are waking up and feel compelled to answer those notifications.

My first piece of advice would be to talk to your children about the amount and type of notifications they are getting during the day and overnight and this will give you an indication if they need some help or not.

Notifications fall into different categories, but as a simple example: human and non-human. Human notifications would be those that come from a real person, for example a text or message from mum or dad. Non-human might be if someone likes your Instagram post, tags you into a post, tells you that there's a new level in a game etc.

Additionally there are many different types of notifications, the most obvious will be a visible alert, audible alert or vibrating alert. With visible alerts, again there are many different types, such as visible on the home screen (e.g. banner), visible on the app (coloured red to grab your attention), in the app itself, an email alert just in case you missed all the other ones, and more.

So here's what I would do. Firstly, start off with a blank canvas: turn off all notifications, every single one of them. This gives you a starting point.

Then, discuss with your child what is important to them, in other words prioritize. For example, human notifications are important, but not all of them. You could go through their WhatsApp groups with them and discuss whether they really need to be in those groups. Many children complain that they just keep getting put (invited) into groups, but WhatsApp have a new feature in the settings where you can prevent this happening, so check the settings out and alter to suit you and your child.

Next, go through the non-human notifications. With the exception of Twitter (which I use for business) I have all notifications in all other apps turned off. I will decide when I go into that app to see what's going on, I don't want some tech company triggering me with a notification just because they want me to go in there to see more ads.

Within any apps that you leave notifications turned on, you still need to manage what type of notification so that you aren't inundated with multiple notification types for one notification.

Some people advise turning your device screen to greyscale which takes away the compelling nature of bright colours (e.g. red). I don't do this personally but it's an option.

Turn off all notifications automatically at a pre-determined time each night). All my notifications are turned off at 9PM every night and come back on at 0800.

This is by no means a solution, but I hope it goes some way to helping.

Alan

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.

Below are 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:

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

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

https://www.internetmatters.org/

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…"

https://www.youtube.com



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 so that you can replicate the same advice at home.



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.

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