

# KEY FINDINGS

## The *EU Kids Online* survey

This report presents the full findings from a **new and unique survey** designed and conducted according to rigorous standards by the *EU Kids Online* network. It was funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme in order to strengthen the evidence base for policies regarding online safety.

- **A random stratified sample of 25,142 children** aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents, was interviewed during Spring/Summer 2010 in 25 European countries.
- **The survey investigated key online risks:** pornography, bullying, receiving sexual messages, contact with people not known face to face, offline meetings with online contacts, potentially harmful user-generated content and personal data misuse.
- In this report, **'children' refers to internet-using children aged 9-16 across Europe.** 'Using the internet' includes any devices by which children go online and any places in which they go online.

## Uses and activities online

- **Use is now thoroughly embedded in children's daily lives:** 93% of 9-16 year old users go online at least weekly (60% go online everyday or almost every day).
- **Children are going online at ever younger ages** - the average age of first internet use is seven in Denmark and Sweden and eight in several other Northern countries. Across all countries, one third of 9-10 year olds who use the internet go online daily, this rising to 80% of 15-16 year olds.
- The most common location of internet use is at home (87%), followed by school (63%). But **internet access is diversifying** – 49% use it in their bedroom and 33% via a mobile phone or handheld device. Access via a handheld device exceeds one in five in Norway, the UK, Ireland and Sweden.
- **Children do a range of diverse and potentially beneficial things online:** 9-16 year olds use the internet for school work (85%), playing games (83%), watching video clips (76%) and instant messaging (62%). Fewer post images (39%) or messages (31%)

for others to share, use a webcam (31%), file-sharing sites (16%) or blog (11%).

- **59% of 9-16 year olds have a social networking profile** – including 26% aged 9-10, 49% aged 11-12, 73% aged 13-14 and 82% aged 15-16. Social networking is most popular in the Netherlands (80%), Lithuania (76%) and Denmark (75%), and least in Romania (46%), Turkey (49%) and Germany (51%).
- **Among social network users, 26% have public profiles** – more in Hungary (55%), Turkey (46%), and Romania (44%); 29% have more than 100 contacts, though many have fewer.
- Among social network users, 43% keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 28% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it. **Notably, 26% report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it.**

## Digital skills

- It is likely that **more use facilitates digital literacy and safety skills.** One third of 9-16 year olds (36%) say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true' of them, one third (31%) say it is 'a bit true' and one third (33%) say it is 'not true' of them.
- **Younger children tend to lack skills and confidence.** However, most 11-16 year olds can block messages from those they do not wish to contact (64%) or find safety advice online (64%). Around half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (56%) compare websites to judge their quality (56%) or block spam (51%).

## Risk and harm

**Risk does not necessarily result in harm, as reported by children.** Children who use the internet were asked if they had encountered a range of online risks and, then, if they had been bothered by this, where 'bothered' was defined as something that *"made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."* Findings vary by child (e.g. age, gender), country and risk type, so generalisations should be treated with caution.

- **12% of European 9-16 year olds say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet.** This includes 9% of 9-10 year olds. However, most children do not report being bothered or upset by going online.
- **Risks are not necessarily experienced by children as upsetting or harmful.** For example, **seeing sexual images and receiving sexual messages online** are encountered by one in eight children but they are generally not experienced as harmful except by a few of the children who are exposed to them.
- **By contrast, being bullied online** by receiving nasty or hurtful messages is relatively uncommon, experienced by one in twenty children, but it is the risk most likely to upset children.
- **Further, only 1 in 12 children have met an online contact offline, and also this risk rarely has a harmful consequence, according to children.**
- Boys, especially teenagers, are more exposed to sexual images online, while teenage girls are slightly more likely to receive nasty or hurtful messages online. However, **girls are generally more likely to be upset by the risks they experience.**
- The survey asked about a range of risks, as detailed below. Looking across all these risks, 41% of European **9-16 year olds have encountered one or more of these risks.**
- **Risks increase with age:** 14% of 9-10 year olds have encountered one or more of the risks asked about, rising to 33% of 11-12 year olds, 49% of 13-14 year olds and 63% of 15-16 year olds.

## Pornography

- **14% of 9-16 year olds have in the past 12 months seen images online that are “obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex.”**
- Of those who have seen sexual or pornographic images online, one in three were bothered by the experience and, of those, half (i.e. one sixth of those exposed to sexual images or around 2% of all children) were either fairly or very upset by what they saw.
- **Looking across all media, 23% of children have seen sexual or pornographic content in the past 12 months – with the internet now as common a source of pornography as TV, film and video.**
- Older teenagers are four times more likely than the youngest children to have seen pornography online or offline and the sexual images they have seen

online are more explicit. But, **younger children are more bothered or upset by sexual images online than are teenagers.**

- **53% of those who had been bothered by seeing sexual images online told someone about this the last time it happened** – 33% told a friend, 25% told a parent. However, 25% simply stopped using the internet for a while and few changed their filter or contact settings.

## Bullying

- **In relation to online bullying, 6% of 9-16 year olds have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online, and 3% have sent such messages to others.** Over half of those who received bullying messages were fairly or very upset.
- Since 19% have been bullied either online and/or offline (compared with 6% online), and 12% have bullied someone else either online and/or offline (compared with 3% online), it seems **more bullying occurs offline than online.**
- Most children who had received nasty or hurtful messages online called on social support: one quarter had not told anyone. Six in ten also used online strategies – deleting hurtful messages or blocking the bully; this last was seen by children as effective.

## ‘Sexting’

- **15% of 11-16 year olds have received peer to peer “sexual messages or images ...[meaning] talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex,” and 3% say they have sent or posted such messages.**
- Of those who have received such messages, nearly one quarter were been bothered by this. Further, of those who have been bothered, nearly half were fairly or very upset. So, overall, one eighth of those who received such messages, or nearly 2% of all children, have been fairly or very upset by sexual messaging.
- **Among those who had been bothered by ‘sexting’, about four in ten blocked the person who sent the messages (40%) and/or deleted the unwanted sexual messages (38%).** In most cases, the child said that this action helped the situation. Such constructive coping responses could be encouraged among more children.

## Meeting online contacts offline

- The **most common risky activity** reported by children online is communicating with new people not met face-to-face. **30% of European children aged 9-16 who use the internet have communicated in the past with someone they have not met face-to-face before, an activity which may be risky but may be fun.**
- It is **much rarer** for children to meet a new online contact offline. **9% of children have met an online contact offline in the past year. 1% of all children (or one in nine of those who went to a meeting) have been bothered by such a meeting.**
- Although 9-10 year olds are the least likely to have met an online contact offline, they are most likely to have been bothered by what happened (31% of those who had been to such a meeting).

## Other risks

- The second most common risk is exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content. **21% of 11-16 year olds have been exposed to one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content: hate (12%), pro-anorexia (10%), self-harm (7%), drug-taking (7%), suicide (5%).**
- **9% of 11-16 year olds have had their personal data misused – abuse of the child's password (7%) or their personal information (4%), or they have been cheated of their money online (1%).**
- **30% of 11-16 year olds reports one or more experiences linked to excessive internet use 'fairly' or 'very often'** (e.g. neglecting friends, schoolwork or sleep).

## Differences across countries

- **Comparing across countries, encounters with one or more online risks include around six in ten children in Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, the Czech Republic and Sweden.** Lower incidence of risk is found in Portugal, Italy and Turkey.
- Children are more likely to say they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet in Denmark (28%), Estonia (25%), Norway and Sweden (23%) and Romania (21%); they are less likely to say this in Italy (6%), Portugal (7%) and Germany (8%).
- The more children in a country use the internet daily, the more those children have encountered one or

more risks. However, **more use also brings more opportunities and, no doubt, more benefits.**

- The greatest range of activities online is also claimed by children in Lithuania, the Czech Republic Estonia, France and Sweden, while the least are undertaken in Ireland and then Turkey. In other words, internet use brings both risks and opportunities, and the line between them is not easy to draw.

## Parental awareness

- **Among those children who have experienced one of these risks, parents often don't realise this.**
- 40% of parents whose child has seen sexual images online say that their child has not seen this; 56% of parents whose child has received nasty or hurtful messages online say that their child has not;
- 52% of parents whose child has received sexual messages say that their child has not; 61% of parents whose child has met offline with an online contact say that their child has not.
- Although the incidence of these risks affects a minority of children in each case, the level of parental underestimation is more substantial.

## Parental mediation

- **Most parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (70%) and stay nearby when the child is online (58%). But one in eight parents (13%) seem never to do any of the forms of mediation asked about, according to their children.**
- Over half of parents also take over positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (56%) and talking about things that might bother the child (52%), and third have helped their child when something arose in the past (36%).
- Parents also restrict children's disclosure of personal information (85%), uploading (63%) and downloading (57%).
- One in two parents monitors their child's internet use later, making this the least favoured strategy by comparison with positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use.
- **The use of technical safety tools is relatively low: just over a quarter of parents blocks or filters websites (28%) and/or tracks the websites visited by their child (24%).**

- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful, especially 9-12 year olds.
- Most parents (85%) are confident about their role, feeling that they can help their child if the latter encounters something that bothers them online. Parents are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them (79%), and 15% claim that they mediate differently because of something that had bothered the child in the past.
- **Two thirds of children (68%) think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. However, 29% say they ignore their parents a little and 8% of children say they ignore a lot.**
- Less than half (44%) of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 11% saying it limits their activities a lot. Children in some countries feel rather more restricted by parental mediation (e.g. in Turkey, Ireland and Bulgaria) than in others (e.g. Hungary, and the Netherlands). 15% would like their parents to do a little or a lot more and 12% would like their parents to do rather less.
- Many parents (73%) are confident that is not very or at all likely that their child will encounter anything that bothers them in the next six months.
- **Comparing across sources of safety advice online, it seems that most advice is received from parents (63%), then teachers (58%), then peers (44%).**
- But for the older teenagers and for children from lower SES homes, advice from teachers overtakes that of parents.
- Other relatives (47%), interestingly, are generally as important as peers in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.
- Information received by children via the traditional mass media (20%) are less used, with online sources even less frequently used (12% have gained safety advice from websites).
- Parents get internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends (48%), then traditional media (32%), the child's school (27%), internet service providers (22%) and websites (21%).
- **Only around 9% of parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety. Many parents want far more information on internet safety than they actually get from the child's school, from government or local authorities, from welfare organisations and charities and, to a lesser extent, from manufacturers and retailers.**

## Other sources of safety advice

- **Around half of children think that their teachers have engaged with their internet use in most of the ways asked about, and 73% of children say their teachers have done at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about.**
- **Age differences are noteworthy: teachers' engagement with children's internet use is least among 9-10 year olds.**
- There is a fair degree of national variation in the role that teachers play, from 97% of teachers in Norway engaging with children's internet use to a low of 65% in Italy.
- Three quarters (73%) of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about.
- Peers are much more likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty.
- **44% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, and 35% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends.**

## Policy implications

The findings have implications for multiple stakeholders:

- The priority for awareness-raising for parents should be on alerting parents to the nature of the risks their children may encounter online whilst encouraging dialogue and greater understanding between parents and children in relation to young people's online activities.
- **Parent would prefer to get information** on internet safety from, firstly the child's school, so greater efforts should be undertaken by the education sector. But, since parental and children's use of industry tools (such as online safety information, filters, 'report abuse' buttons etc.) is relatively low, greater public awareness, trust, and ease of use should also be developed by industry.
- As use of the internet becomes more personalised, the role of parents and teachers become difficult. This places **greater responsibility on industry** to manage the nature of the risks children encounter, and to ensure they have the tools they need to prevent or cope with harm. It also burdens children more with the responsibility for their own safety, and thus internet safety messaging should seek to build

confidence, resilience and **digital citizenship skills among children**.

- **Industry efforts** to support positive content as well as internet safety should be improved. Technical tools to support blocking, reporting, filtering should also be a cornerstone of industry child protection policy with a need to increase awareness of such mechanisms and to improve their accessibility and usability to aid better take up by parents and children.
- **Children** should also be encouraged to assume responsibility for their own safety as much as possible with a focus on empowerment, emphasising responsible behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Since many children do not report encountering the risks asked about, with even fewer having been bothered or upset by their online experiences, future safety policy should target resources and guidance where they are particularly needed – especially for **younger children** who go online. Indeed, a new policy focus is vital for awareness-raising and support measures designed to suit the needs of much younger internet users, especially by primary schools.
- **Digital skills training** needs continued emphasis and updating in terms of training, safety features, and applications operation to ensure that all children reach a minimum basic standard and to prevent digitally isolated and unskilled children. This should also seek to broaden the range of activities undertaken by children, since many make little use of creative opportunities online.
- Moreover, since less than half of 9-16 year olds are very satisfied with levels of online provision available to them, even fewer among younger children, there is a responsibility on all policy actors to ensure **greater availability of age-appropriate positive content** for children, especially in small language communities.

## Note on methodology

- This report is **the work of the EU Kids Online network**, coordinated by the LSE, with research teams and stakeholder advisors in each of the 25 countries and an international advisory panel.
- Initial findings from this report were presented at the Safer Internet Forum on 21/10/10. The present report presents full findings from the survey for all 25 countries.
- **Countries included in EU Kids Online are:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the

Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. Unless countries are specified, findings are weighted averages across all countries.

- It is acknowledged that it is particularly difficult to measure private or upsetting aspects of a child's experience. The survey was conducted in children's homes, as a face to face interview. It included a self-completion section for sensitive questions to avoid being heard by parents, other family members or the interviewer.
- For **full details and availability of the project methodology**, materials, technical fieldwork report and research ethics, see [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

# KEY FINDINGS FOR THE UK

## Usage

### What do 9-16 year olds children in the UK say about how they access the internet?

- Compared to the European average, more UK children go online at school (91% vs. 63%), at home (95% vs. 87%) and when 'out and about' (21% vs. 9%).
- Half (52%) go online in their bedroom or other private room and more than half (57%) at a friend's house. As for Europe as a whole, girls and boys have similar levels of access to the internet in their own bedroom.
- Half of UK children go online via a mobile device - 26% report handheld access to the internet (e.g. iPod Touch, iPhone or Blackberry) and an additional 33% access the internet via their mobile phone. Equivalent figures for the 25 countries in the European survey are lower (12% and 22%).

**More access results in more use, and the internet is now taken for granted in many children's daily lives.**

- 9-16 year olds children were eight years old on average when they first used the internet, putting UK children among the youngest in Europe when they first go online.
- 70% go online daily or almost daily, 26% use it once or twice a week, leaving just 4% who go online less often. In terms of frequency of use, higher figures are seen in Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Lithuania.
- The average time spent online by UK 9-16 year olds is just over an hour and a half per day (102 minutes), higher than the European average (88 minutes).

**But some children still lack key digital and safety skills, especially younger children.**

- Bookmarking websites, finding information on how to use the internet safely and blocking messages are all skills that most UK children claim to have. But only a third claim to be able to change filter preferences.
- Still, among the younger children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills which policy initiatives should address. Around one third of 11-12 year olds cannot bookmark a site, and even more cannot block messages from people they don't want to hear from.
- Four in ten UK 9-16 year olds (37%) say the statement "I know more about the internet than my parents" is 'very true' of them, a quarter (29%) say it is 'a bit true' and one third (34%, though 65% of 9-10 year olds) say it is 'not true' of them.

**Arguably, some children use the internet too much.**

- UK children's experiences of excessive use are more common than the European average: 51% have spent less time with family and friends than they should because of time they spend on the internet and 39% have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet.

## Activities

**What do UK 9-16 year old internet users do online?**

- Top activities are using the internet for schoolwork (92%), playing games (83%), watching video clips (75%) and social networking (71%).
- Creating content is much less common than receiving it. For example, 71% have watched video clips online but only 45% have posted photos, videos or music to share with others. Fewer have spent time in a virtual world (19%) or blogged (12%). Still, UK children

participate and create online more than children in many other countries.

**Social networking sites (SNS) are very popular.**

- 67% of children who use the internet in the UK have their own SNS profile, a little more than the European average of 59%.
- Only 28% of 9-10 year olds but 59% of 11-12 year olds have a profile, suggesting that it is the start of secondary school, rather than the minimum age set by popular providers, that triggers social networking.
- UK children report substantially more SNS contacts than in most of Europe, coming second only to Hungarian and Belgian children: 16% of UK SNS users have more than 300 contacts, 26% have between 100 and 300.

**Some of children's online communication practices could be considered risky:**

- Most SNS users have their profile set to private or partially private; but 11% in the UK (many of them boys) have made it public (lower than the 26% across Europe).
- 19% of 11-16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than younger children) say they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.
- Four in ten (39%) 9-16 year old internet users have looked for new friends on the internet, 32% have added contacts they don't know face-to-face, and 11% have sent an image of themselves to someone they have not met face to face.
- One reason for such apparently risky communications may be that half (55%) of 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves online. Also, 49% talk about different things online than offline, and a quarter (29%) talk about more private things online than when present with other people face to face.

## Subjective harm

Before asking children about specific online risk experiences, we asked them about experiences online that had bothered them in some way, explaining that **by 'bothered' we meant, "made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."**

- Children are four times more likely to say that the internet bothers other children (48%) than they are to say something has bothered them personally in the past year. Still, 13% say they have been bothered or

upset by something online in the past year – this figure is about the same as the European average.

- By implication, half of 9-16 year olds do not see the internet as problematic for children of their age. Younger children are least likely to be concerned. More strikingly, the vast majority have not experienced a problem themselves.
- Parents (though not children) seem a bit less likely to see the internet as problematic for boys than for girls.
- Even though 8% of 9-10 year olds say they've been bothered by something online, their parents are less likely to recognise this: only 6% of their parents say that something has bothered my child online.
- Among 11-12 year olds, almost one in seven report that the child has encountered something that bothered or upset them (13% of children and 10% of parents say this). Since this is when British children start secondary school, the problem may be increased internet use then, or a new peer group encouraging risk-taking, or related to the onset of adolescence.

## Specific risks

The *EU Kids Online* survey explored children's experiences of a range of possible risks online. The nature of these experiences, which children are most affected, and how children respond are questions to be pursued in a future report.

### Sexual images

- One quarter (24%) of UK 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is close to the European average of 23%.
- However, rather fewer - 11% - of UK children have encountered sexual images online. 8% of UK 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity, 6% (more teenagers than young children) have seen images of someone having sex, 6% have seen someone's genitals online and 2% say they have seen violent sexual images.
- Among children who have seen online sexual images, 41% of parents say their child has not seen this, while 30% recognise that they have and 29% say they don't know.
- As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them.

- Overall, most children have not experienced sexual images online and, even of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

### Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 21% of UK children (and 19% across Europe) say they have been bullied, but just 8% say this occurred on the internet. Still, this is more than for Europe overall (6%).
- Most common is nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child (7%), followed by messages being posted or passed on (5%) and other nasty things online (4%). Only 2% have been threatened online.
- 11% of children say they have bullied others, though only 2-3% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.

### Sexual messages

- 12% of 11-16 year old internet users have received sexual messages, although 4% have sent them. In the UK, 'sexting' appears a little less common than across Europe.
- 7% of UK 11-16 year olds have been sent a sexual message, and 5% have seen a sexual message posted online. Only 3% have seen others perform sexual acts in a message and 2% had been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online.

### Meeting online contacts offline

- 29% of UK children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face. This percentage is similar to the European average.
- 4% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online. This is slightly less than half the European average (which is 9% across all countries).
- Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face. They are also more likely to have gone on to meet them in person – though such instances are rare.

### Other online risks

- 19% of UK 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 32% of 14-16 year old girls. This UK finding is lower than across Europe, where the average is 21%.
- Most common are hate messages (13%), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites and sites talking about drug experiences (both 8%). The first two percentages are slightly below the European average. Few (2%) have visited a suicide site.

- The main misuse of personal data experienced by UK children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (10%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (4%). These percentages are similar to the European average.

## Parental mediation

While 70% of UK 9-16 year olds go online daily or almost daily, the same holds for just 59% of their parents – this breaks down as around 63% of parents of 9-12 year olds and 55% of parents of 13-16 year olds.

### How do UK parents manage their children's internet use?

- Most notably, the survey shows that parents and children agree to a high degree in their accounts of parental mediation.
- Most UK parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (74%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.
- Parents do considerably more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet – including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. But one in ten parents (11%) never do any of these things.
- Explaining why websites are good or bad (73%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (71%), and helping when something is difficult to do or find (73%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation - the UK is near the top of ranking of countries in terms of parents actively mediating their children's safety.
- 87% of UK children say that they are either not allowed to do some of a list of online activities (disclose personal information, upload, download, etc.) or that restrictions apply, and younger children face more restrictions.
- Monitoring strategies are adopted by over half (55%) of UK parents, making this fairly common and yet the least favoured strategy by comparison with positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use (as in Europe generally).
- 54% of parents block or filter websites and track the websites visited by the children (46%), according to their children - these findings are far higher than in Europe generally, coming at the top of the country ranking for use of filters.

- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over two thirds of children (74%) say it helps a lot or a little.
- 90% of parents are confident that they can help their child if something that bothers them online.
- However, 56% of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 13% saying it limits their activities a lot.
- Three quarters of UK children (74%) do not simply ignore parental mediation, this being above the European average (64%). However, 20% say they ignore their parents' mediation a little and 6% of children say they ignore their parents mediation a lot.
- 23% parents think it likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.
- 14% of children (and 21% of 9-10 year olds) would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use, while 45% of parents think that they should do more in relation to their child's internet use.

## Other forms of mediation

### In addition to parents, other sources, including teachers and friends, may support children's internet use and safety.

- 93% of children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. This is substantially higher than the European average of 73%.
- One in ten children who use the internet has received no guidance or advice from their teachers.
- Friends are likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (60%). Fewer say that friends help when they are bothered by something (26%), but this may reflect the fact that few are bothered. When children are bothered by something online, more turn to a parent (42%) than to a teacher (37%); friends are third in line at 26%.
- While 33% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 33% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends. However, most internet safety advice is received from teachers (86%), then parents (71%), then peers (33%).
- Other relatives (42%) are also important in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.
- UK parents receive internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends (41%), then internet



service providers (32%), the child's school (28%), websites (22%) and traditional media (18%). In the UK, traditional media appear much less important than in Europe generally (32%).

- One in ten parents (10%) say that they don't want further information on internet safety, especially parents of 15-16 year olds. But the majority would like more.

## Conclusions

**It may be hazarded that the very considerable efforts put into raising awareness and improving safety online for UK children in recent years are bearing fruit.** UK children experience rather fewer online risks than might be expected given their high degree of access and use. Moreover, their parents are relatively more aware of their experiences and they do considerably more to mediate their children's internet safety than the European average.

**Future efforts should focus especially on younger children as they gain internet access, and on the diversification of platforms** (access in bedrooms, via mobile phones and handheld devices). The array of possible risks online continues to change, with emerging risks including potentially harmful user-generated content such as anorexia, self-harm or suicide sites (for example, one in five teenage girls has visited a pro-anorexia or bulimia website, yet little is known of such practices or their consequences as yet).

In planning for risk *management*, it must be borne in mind that risk *reduction* is not always an optimal strategy – children encounter a fair number of risks that, at least as they see it, are not problematic, upsetting or harmful. Although addressing levels of risk remains important, it is the case that children learn to cope by encountering some degree of risk and, it seems, many do cope successfully – at least if one takes seriously children's accounts of whether online risk results in being upset or harmed. The European study (of which this UK report is part) explores how children cope with online risk, revealing that while a minority are upset by online risks, many benefit from the advice and tools available to them to cope with such upsetting circumstances.

Also important, the findings show that risks and opportunity often go hand in hand – more use tends to bring more of both. Thus efforts to reduce harm should take care not overly to restrict opportunities for children since they benefit from the internet. Since nearly half of UK children say that their parents' efforts at mediation have the effect of restricting their online activities, the trade-off is clear, if difficult for parents to manage.