

Children on reporting online harms





Research showing that young people are more likely to block someone behaving inappropriately than report them

The scale of online abuse and harassment among children could be higher than currently thought as research shows many do not report harmful content they face online.

Safer internet charity Childnet is warning that children are not reporting online harms, often due to a lack of confidence that anything will be done about the issues they face.

Research from the charity shows that fewer than half of young people trust their favourite apps, games and social media platforms to remove content if it is reported to them. According to the findings, children and young people are often more likely to block someone behaving inappropriately than report them online.

According to the research:

-  Nearly a third of children say they **sometimes do nothing** when they are upset or worried about something online, with more than one in 20 (7%) regularly doing nothing in response.
-  When we asked them about their favourite apps, games, social media sites or websites, **nearly one in three** (28%) told us they have seen something online that they wanted to report, but didn't. For 13-year-olds it was 37%.
-  Many young people find blocking is a useful tool in response to being worried or upset about something online – they are more than **twice as likely** to block someone online (44%) as report them (21%). Only 17% of 11-year-olds said they would report.
-  Under 50% of all age groups believe that something they reported **that could be harmful** would be removed.

“Understanding how young people are using the safety tools available to them whilst using online services, such as online games and social media, is critical to providing them with the right tools.”
Will Gardner OBE, Childnet CEO



46%

Fewer than half of young people aged 8-17 believe that if they report another user, that user won't find out. Specifically amongst the 12-year-olds surveyed, this figure drops to just 41%

43%

of young people believe that if they report something that could harm young people, the online platform would remove it. This figure drops below 40% amongst 9-year-olds

What young people say:

When asked whether children understand the link between an app's community guidelines and whether a report will result in, for example, a piece of content being removed, a Childnet Digital Champion, aged 14, said: "I do think young people understand this link, however it may be confusing to young people and make the guidelines seem blurred when they report something clearly against the guidelines, yet it doesn't get taken down."

On why young people are often more likely to block than report, another Digital Champion, 16, said: "By blocking someone, you won't see them again whereas reporting them doesn't always achieve that."

A Digital Leader, 14, added: "In my experience, the report feature on most apps has no effect if the report is unsuccessful. Young people may find it easier to block someone as they know they do not have to input a reason."

"If a report fails, young people may feel as they have no other choice but to block, as it gives a quick and easy fix that will block out the problem until something else is done about it."

Childnet Digital Champion, 14

Two thirds of young people (65%) say they understand **what types of content are not allowed online**, while nearly 7 in 10 say they always do something in response to seeing content that worries or upsets them (68%).

However, half of young people (49%) say they have **talked to someone** after something has worried or upset them online.

Only 10% of children aged 8-17 **strongly agree** that they know how to report different types of content on the platforms they use, with this percentage dipping into single figures for 11-12 year olds.

50% say they know how to **report different types of content**, and fewer than a third (30%) think it is easy to go through the steps to make a report online.

While 35% of young people don't worry about the consequences of making a report, the rest are **worried (27%) or unsure (38%)** about whether they will get in trouble or be blocked by a platform if they report something that doesn't breach a platform's community standards.

22%

of young people have experienced the block or report tool on an online service being used as a way to bully or exclude them

'Reporting tools must be effective and responsive'

Will Gardner OBE, CEO of Childnet and Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre, believes the study highlights a lack of confidence among young people in the reporting mechanisms available on online platforms.

He said: "Understanding how young people are using the safety tools available to them whilst using online services, such as online games and social media, is critical to providing them with the right tools.

"It can also help to ensure the provision of the right awareness and understanding of what these tools can do and how they can help.

"This report shines a light on this as well as the level of young people's confidence in the tools available to them. Young people's confidence in safety tools is critical, and reporting tools need to be effective and responsive to ensure this confidence."

"It is vital that we are working to listen to young people to understand their perspective and experience on this to help ensure the safety mechanisms on online services are doing what they should be."

"Depending on the site, reporting tools can be very hard to find and/or complicated to use so many people don't. It varies between website because in some cases it is quite hidden or it takes a very long time to complete the form." Childnet Digital Champion, 14



UK Safer Internet Centre

The UK Safer Internet Centre is a partnership of three leading online safety organisations: Childnet International, Internet Watch Foundation and South West Grid for Learning, with a shared mission to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online.

The centre coordinates Safer Internet Day each year, reaching millions of young people, parents and carers, and educators across the UK, giving them the vital support they need to keep young people safe online.

- This quantitative survey was conducted online by Populus in February and March 2020, with 1,064 young people aged 8-17.

The UK Safer Internet Centre provides resources which can help parents support their children online. These resources can be accessed on the UK Safer Internet Centre website (see below)