ESRO

Ofcom
Children's Media Lives –
Year 3 Findings

Contents

REVEALING REALITY

1. About this report

This document provides analysis of the findings from the third year of Ofcom's Children's Media Lives study. This research began in 2014 as a way of providing a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative complement to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy.

Media literacy enables people to have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make full use of the opportunities presented both by traditional and by new communications services. Media literacy also helps people manage content and communications, and protect themselves and their families from the potential risks associated with using these services. The Communications Act 2003 placed a responsibility on Ofcom to promote, and to carry out research into, media literacy. This report contributes to Ofcom's work in this area.

The project follows, as far as possible, the same 18 children, aged 8-15 at the beginning of the study, interviewing them on camera each year about their media habits and attitudes. It provides evidence about the motivations and the context for media use, and how these media are part of daily life and domestic circumstances. The project also provides rich details of how children's media habits and attitudes change over time, particularly in the context of their emotional and cognitive development.

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2. Executive summary

The Children's Media Lives study was set up in 2014 to provide a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative complement to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy. Taking the form of annual in-depth interviews, the study tracks, as far as possible, the same 18 children, aged 8-15 in year 1. The third wave of research was completed in summer 2016, following the previous two, in autumn 2014 and spring 2015. A fourth wave will be conducted in 2017.

The study provides an in-depth understanding of how this illustrative sample of children are thinking about and using digital media, and how this differs and is influenced by age, life-stage, family circumstances, peer groups and wider society. It explores how digital media use evolves over time as children develop, and in response to offline factors such as new schools, friendships, and access to new technologies.

We examined a number of core themes in this third wave of research, including: TV watching behaviour, parental mediation, YouTubers and vlogging, critical thinking (the extent to which children critically asses their media environment), social media, with a particular focus on group chat services, and digital creativity. The main findings are set out below.

2.1 SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

CONTEXT MATTERS

The biggest changes in media behaviour are often driven by offline factors.

The biggest changes observed in media behaviour were often the result of changes in a child's circumstances. Changes in physical space such as moving house, changes in family structure such as new step-parents or siblings, and changes to a child's environment such as starting secondary school, could all have a big impact on their media habits. Children's media habits also changed as they grew older and their attitudes changed, typically influenced by a combination of increased cognitive capacity, self-consciousness and social awareness.

As children grow older, their media habits are increasingly driven by social factors.

Younger children tended to use online media for entertainment purposes and consume online content passively, while older children were increasingly motivated by the social possibilities offered by the online world. They were becoming aware that social media could offer new networks through which to generate social capital, and new platforms on which to experiment with identity creation. The stages at which children began to use social media varied hugely. Some younger children were early adopters, but initially used social media more for entertainment purposes, as their online social worlds were still relatively limited.

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Watching the TV set is often seen as a family activity, and children rarely watch alone.

Although children were consuming a significant amount of content alone on their personal devices, watching the TV set was a valued family activity. In some cases, family members had a shared viewing routine based on when their favourite shows were broadcast, although favourite family shows were also watched on catch-up services. When not watching the TV set with their parents, children were likely to be watching it with their siblings. This was in contrast to their use of tablets and phones for consuming content, which was largely a solitary activity.

Young people tend to 'jump' from watching children's to adult content on their TV sets.

We observed, in some children, a sudden shift in viewing – from 'child' to 'adult' content – as they grew up. This shift often occurred when they switched from watching TV with younger siblings to watching with parents, and the age at which it happened varied from child to child. Some children in our sample were watching content that was fairly adult in theme and complexity, but which was often not considered inappropriate when consumed in a family setting.

YouTube is a key source of teen content for most children, with YouTubers popular across our sample.

YouTube was an important source of teen content for young people, and children were far more likely to consume teen content online than on broadcast TV. In particular, YouTubers (commercially successful or popular vloggers) were popular in our sample (see page 14 for discussion on the terminology). They provided entertainment as well as advice on social issues, acting as aspirational figures and role-models for some of the children in our sample.

Children often look up to characters they see in their favourite content.

Young people were choosing to identify with characters from a variety of sources, both on broadcast TV and online media, as well as from offline sources. The characters they talked about often revealed whether they were consuming more child, teen or adult content. Children watching a lot of children's content were likely to choose favourites from these sources, whereas children consuming older content were likely to admire YouTubers, sports personalities or adult characters such as Harvey Spector, a lawyer working in mergers and acquisitions in the TV programme Suits.

CHANGES IN PARENTAL REGULATION

The TV set is controlled less than other devices

As watching the TV set was generally a shared family activity, parents were more aware of their children's TV viewing habits, and what content they were consuming via the TV, than they were for other devices. Watching TV was valued as an important way of spending time together as a family. Parents were therefore less likely to set rules around watching TV, and were more likely to focus on controlling other devices such as games consoles, smartphones or personal laptops, especially if these were used compulsively by their child, or if their use intruded on family time.

Parents are more likely to control smartphones, as these tend to be the devices their children use most.

Parents worried more about smartphones than other devices, and this was more marked than in previous waves. In this wave, more children had smartphones, and those with phones were using them more frequently. Smartphones were also a cause for concern because they are private and portable, and so harder to control, compared to larger, shared devices. Parents of younger

children without smartphones tended to control whichever device their child used the most. For younger boys especially, this was often a games console.

Parents have developed a range of strategies for monitoring their child's activity on their personal device

Parents monitored their child's online activities in a number of ways, including checking their child's device, or ensuring that their child used the internet in a communal room, where they could be easily observed. Parents mainly tended to worry about their child accessing social media or inappropriate content. Some parents had two different sets of rules for their child, especially if they were divorced.

CHANGES IN CRITICAL THINKING

Most of the children in our sample are developing their understanding of the online world as they grow up, but this is not necessarily a linear progression.

The young people in our sample did not necessarily apply their critical understanding consistently. Most had developed greater awareness of the online world as they grew older, but this was not generally a clear, linear progression; it was often piecemeal or context-dependent.

Children are more likely to evaluate the trustworthiness of information when they are searching for a specific purpose

Most children did not routinely think about the trustworthiness of online information, although most had a range of strategies that they used when the task or context required it. Most were more likely to apply their critical understanding when looking for information for a specific purpose - especially for homework, where they might be penalised for getting the answers wrong. Most children relied on websites recommended by the school and had only a partial understanding of the ways in which the internet works. Few understood that search results might be generated by algorithms; most tended to 'humanise' the search engine, discussing it as if it had agency.

Some online searching methods obscure the source of information.

Increasingly, information is being reached through media aggregators or social media, which often obscure the sources of the information. This may make it harder for people to understand where the online information comes from, or how trustworthy it is.

This year, young people are more aware of product endorsements than in previous waves of research, in part due to exposure to YouTubers.

In this wave of research children were far more aware of product endorsement, as a means of advertising, than they had been in previous waves. This was partly due to the high profile of YouTubers; most young people were aware that this was how YouTubers made money, although were not sure of the precise details. Some even aspired to this avenue themselves. However, few children recognised that YouTubers' image curation might be part of a wider commercial project, and instead accepted the images presented online at face value.

Peer pressure and YouTube endorsements had a greater affect than traditional advertising on children's interest in products

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Social factors, such as the influence of a close friend, or the latest trend at school, seemed to have a much bigger impact on the children than traditional advertising. YouTubers also had a big observable impact on some children's tastes; most of the children who watched them expressed an interest in the products they promoted. While few children in our sample had bought something as a direct result of a YouTuber's endorsement, or said they aspired to do so, some had bought similar products.

NEW SOCIAL POSSIBILITIES ONLINE

Group chat increasingly dominates interaction on social media.

Group chat services, like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, were increasingly popular and far more prevalent this year than in previous waves of research, with children often having multiple group chats running simultaneously; this reveals a major shift in social media use among young people. These services provided a space for young people to interact online without broadcasting posts or comments to their whole list of contacts (often including family members). They allow them to post only to a defined group of selected friends, and serve as an online space relatively free from adult scrutiny. Often, group chats were larger than the child's immediate social group, which sometimes posed problems by blurring the boundaries between 'friends' and 'non-friends', and confused the social rules applying to these different relationships.

Some young people ignore warnings about online privacy because they are tempted by the social advantage of keeping their profile public.

The social capital accrued by getting 'likes' or other endorsements online had tempted some of the young people to keep their social media profiles public, despite being told at school and elsewhere that this might be risky. The high-profile success of many YouTubers - who have gained social and economic status through online publicity - contributed to this tension.

Some children are finding subtle ways of being mean online

Children were increasingly aware that their online behaviour could leave traces, and a number of the children in the research described how some of their peers were finding new ways of being mean on social media, without leaving any evidence. Often, the functionality of group chat indirectly facilitated these acts: children were exploiting the ability to add or delete people from groups in order to exclude or hurt them[1]. This form of bullying was likely to come from outside friendship groups rather than from within them.

Young people do not use the term 'bullying', even in extreme cases

'Bullying' was not a word we heard children in our sample use, even in the most severe cases. Instead, they tended to use words like 'banter' to explain mild teasing between friends, and 'harassment' to refer to more severe cases. Children tended to resolve cases of 'banter gone too far' between themselves, and were unlikely to involve an adult unless the case was severe enough to be labelled 'harassment'.

CREATIVITY IS PRESENT, BUT MORE COMMON OFFLINE

Most young people use online media to complement their offline creativity

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[1] More information on group chat functionality can be found in: *4 Introducing the sample.*

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Most young people used online media as a source of inspiration, information or instruction for their offline creative hobbies. This was largely driven by personal interest and social influence, such as the latest trends at school.

Parents are more likely to encourage or facilitate offline creativity

The children exploring digital forms of creativity, such as coding, tended to do this at school; very few developed this interest at home. Some expressed a desire to make videos at home, but few actually got around to making them. Parents tended to be more likely to encourage or facilitate offline creativity – perhaps because of their own limited knowledge, or lack of confidence in dealing with the online world.

Peer groups are both a driver of, and a barrier to, digital creativity

For many of the children in our sample, the desire to be creative online was prompted by their peers. Many creative apps are designed so that the output can be shared with friends through social media, bringing an element of social connection to online creativity. Vloggers were also influential in this sphere, and many children aspired to create their own videos in the same format as popular vloggers. However, peer pressure could also limit the creative drive; children were reluctant to try out or share certain types of creativity online for fear of receiving negative feedback from their peers.

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3. Background and introduction

The Children's Media Lives study was set up in 2014 to provide a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative complement to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy.

Ofcom conducts annual surveys among children and adults that seek to quantify, in a statistically robust way, media access, awareness, skills and understanding. Children's Media Lives aims to provide a human face to the data. It complements the Adults' Media Lives study, a similar programme of qualitative research running since 2005.

Children's Media Lives is a longitudinal study, using annual interviews to track a group of young people who, at the start of the study, were aged 8-15.

The third wave of ethnographic research was conducted in summer 2016 with 18 children, 16 of whom were the same as in the previous year (completed in spring 2015). Every effort is made each year to include the same sample of children, but where individuals have dropped out, they have been replaced with new children, keeping the sample balanced in age, gender and location. The next research wave will be conducted in 2017.

The longitudinal nature of the project allows the research to track changes in children's understanding over time. The sample includes children with a range of devices, family situations and locations across the UK, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

3.2 TOPIC AREAS

Year on year, this study endeavours to provide an in-depth understanding of how the children think about and use digital media, how this differs and how it is influenced by age, life-stage, family circumstances, peers and wider society. The longitudinal element of the research design also allows us to explore how digital media use evolves over time, as the children develop and in response to external changes (for instance new schools, friendships and access to new technology).

A wide range of topics were covered in the third year of research. This report draws these together into some key themes, set out in the following sections:

- **Section 4: Introducing the sample**, introducing two new recruits in this year's respondents, noting any circumstance changes and including brief notes on changes in the digital media landscape.
- **Section 5: Context matters**, exploring how the changing context of young people's lives can affect their digital media use as they grow up. (Building on Changes for the Children, explored in Year 2.)
- **Section 6: New preferences in content**, considering children's new tastes and habits in content consumption, both in terms of broadcast TV and online content like YouTube. (Building on The Role of TV, explored in both Year 1 and Year 2)

- **Section 7: Changes in parental regulation**, exploring parents' strategies for managing their children's engagement with digital technology. (Building on Learning About Risk, explored in Year 1 and Year 2.)
- **Section 8: Changes in critical thinking**, investigating the ways in which children apply critical thinking to their online behaviour (building on Factors that Shape Trust in Year 1 and Year 2.)
- **Section 9: New social possibilities online**, to understand how children navigate social spaces online, exploring specifically the emergence of group chat as a new arena for interaction (building on Social Media and Identity in both Year 1 and Year 2).
- **Section 10: Creativity is present**, but more common offline, considering the ways in which children are using digital tools to explore and develop creativity (new to Year 3).

3.2.1 TRACKING MEASURES

For this longitudinal study, we have tracked some core elements of the children's lives in order to understand changes over time. These core measures are focused on the children's circumstances, development and critical thinking, and include:

- Devices and access to technology
- Cognitive and personal development
- Understanding of advertising
- Understanding of digital organisations
- Understanding of digital funding mechanisms

3.3 METHODOLOGY

Throughout the elapsed time between year 2 and 3, efforts were made to keep the children engaged and positive about the research, including birthday cards and Christmas gifts sent to all the children. Contact was also made with parents at least once in the interim to check for any update in contact details or change of address.

The researchers spent three to four hours with each child and young person in their home, interviewing and understanding their behaviours, attitudes and knowledge of digital media. The interviews on which this analysis is based were informed by a topic guide, developed jointly by ESRO and Ofcom, but the researchers allowed the child to determine the general flow of the conversation. A copy of the topic guide is included in Annex 1. Data capture and stimulus material was used to prompt discussion in areas of the topic guide that were more complex for the children, such as online advertising. Copies of the data capture and stimulus material are included in Annex 2.

The ethnographic interviews were supplemented by short interviews with parents and siblings, to better understand the household dynamics and access to digital media. Interviews were filmed and photographs were taken. However, in order to protect the anonymity of research participants, these are used only in presentations to illustrate the findings.

As detailed above, the methodology for Year 3 of this research was broadly the same as for the previous two years, with some changes to the topic guide and the data capture/ stimulus materials to allow us to develop and enhance our understanding, building on the knowledge gained from earlier visits.

3.4 SAFEGUARDING

All the researchers involved in interviewing the children had advanced DBS clearance and adhered to the ESRO safeguarding policy, available as Annex 3 on the Ofcom website. The researchers were careful to ensure that discussions about risks and adult content were conducted in an age-appropriate manner. The discussions were child-led, so that the research did not introduce new or inappropriate issues or content to the children.

3.5 SAMPLE

The number of participants in the study is relatively small, but these children have been chosen to reflect a broad cross-section of UK children in terms of age, location, ethnicity, social circumstances and access to technology. The main sampling characteristics focused on the following variables:

- Age (spread across 8-15 at the time of recruitment)
- Gender
- Location, including urban and rural areas, and all four nations
- Family set-up, including a mixture of different sibling and parental relationships
- Access to devices (including smartphones, mobile phones, tablets, smart TVs, games consoles)
- Usage levels
- Parental approaches to managing media use
- Parental confidence with digital media

More details of the sampling and recruitment criteria can be found in Annex 4 on the Ofcom website.

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4. Introducing the sample

4.1 SAMPLE CHANGES & NEW CHILDREN

Despite all efforts, three of the original 18 children dropped out in 2014 (David (12); Ben (14); and Neil (15)). In 2015 we recruited two more children (Ade (14) and Irfan (15)). This year, Ade dropped out, so in order to bring the numbers back up to 18 respondents, as in the original sample, two new children were recruited for Year 3: Grant, 13, and Llysha, 13.

4.2 YEAR 3 SAMPLE

The final sample for year 3 of this research, in age order, is:

- **Lily, 10**, lives with her mum, dad and younger sisters in a small town in East England. Since the last wave of research Lily has been diagnosed with autism, and now has special 'Lily-time' sessions at school. She still plays compulsively on her tablet, and had upgraded from her Google Nexus tablet to an iPad mini in this wave.
- **Ahmed, 10**, lives with his mum, older brother and three younger half-brothers in London. Ahmed has ADHD and learning difficulties, but this year has been having extra support and is calmer and more engaged in social activities as a result. Ahmed still plays lots of games, mainly on his Xbox, in his shared bedroom.
- **Peter, 11,** lives with his parents and younger sister in a rural town in the Midlands. He shares a 'playroom' with his sister, next door to the main lounge, where he mainly plays FIFA on the Xbox 360, or watches YouTube on his iPad. He is increasingly into sports, but digital media continue to play a big part in his life.
- **Alice, 11**, has recently moved into a new apartment with her parents and older brother in a village in the South of England. Alice is still very engaged with social media, in particular Instagram, and watches YouTubers regularly, although she has removed her own vlogging attempts from YouTube.
- **Jack, 11**, still lives with his mum and pet tortoise in South England, and this year he has some new additions to his family: his mum has a new partner, who has a son, a couple of years younger than Jack. Jack still entertains himself with media a lot, and still loves playing Minecraft, and watching Minecraft tutorials on YouTube.
- **Josie, 11**, is an only child who spends most of her time with her mum in a small town in the West of England. She is skilled at entertaining herself, spending a lot of time in her garden, and has a lot of hobbies. She is still not allowed on social media, and says she feels left out as a result.
- **Nadia, 12**, lives with her parents and two sisters (one older and one younger) in a town in the North of England. Little has changed for Nadia in the past year. She spends a lot of time in the lounge, either watching the TV set or watching YouTube videos on the desktop computer, mainly her favourite shows on The Disney Channel.
- **William, 12**, still lives with his busy parents and four siblings in a large house on the south coast. He now plays Xbox and has started watching TV with his family, and his new favourite show is Suits.
- **Sarah, 12,** lives with her mum and dad in a busy area in the North of England, and has recently been given her own bedroom for the first time. Her dad has relaxed a lot about her use of digital media, and she now owns a smartphone which she is allowed to take out and about with her.

- **Llysha, 13**, lives in London with her parents and three younger siblings. She is conscientious and works hard at school, using online media to relax. Her favourite game is The Sims, and she can spend hours playing this on her laptop or watching game-play tutorials on YouTube.
- **Grant, 13,** lives in London with his parents and younger brother. He goes to an all-boys school nearby, and takes his work seriously. He spends a lot of time watching videos on YouTube on the family computer, and chatting to friends on WhatsApp using his smartphone. He is Christian, and prays every morning, as well as going to Church and youth groups at the weekends.
- **Minnie, 14,** has four older siblings who no longer live at home, where she lives with her mum in the East of England. She bought herself an iPad with her own money, which she uses in addition to her iPod Touch to play games, watch YouTube and watch films on Netflix and iPlayer.
- **Carmen, 15**, is an only child who lives with her mum, aunt and grandmother in Manchester. The family is religious and practise Islam. Little has changed for Carmen: she is still mature for her age, and in this wave she has started to develop an interest in beauty, and watches beauty vloggers on YouTube.
- **Robert, 15**, is an only child who lives with his mum in a Scottish town. He loves football and spends a lot of his time watching sports news on TV, accessing sports news on his smartphone and playing FIFA on his PlayStation. He also loves listening to podcasts and using Twitter to follow actors from his favourite films.
- **Calum, 15**, lives with his older brother and parents in a large house on a suburban street in the Midlands. He no longer plays Xbox, and spends most of his time playing rugby, football and cricket, or messaging friends on Facebook Messenger.
- **Eve, 16**, lives with her parents just outside London and has an older sister who is at university. She spends a lot of time watching TV and is a keen Facebook and Instagram user, having multiple group chats on the go on these platforms.
- **Irfan, 16,** lives in South Wales with his mum, dad, and brother (his sister recently married and moved out). His mum is a practising Muslim although his dad is not. Irfan is shy around adults, but has quite a wide friendship group at school, and is a member of several group chats. He is relatively academic and dedicated to revising for exams.
- **Brigit, 17,** lives with her mum and three younger siblings, whom she helps to parent, in a small town in Northern Ireland. She's recently been the victim of a spate of online harassment, and so closed her Facebook account, but nevertheless remains an avid social media user and has kept an account with almost all the other major sites: Twitter, Pinterest, Ask FM, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.

4.3 AN EVOLVING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

This year we observed some changes in children's media habits that are worth outlining broadly here, in order to contextualise the findings in this report. There were two specific digital habits that were strikingly common in this year's sample, which we explore in more detail below:

- **Vloggers/YouTubers**: a common source of content, especially for teenagers, who tended to watch on their personal devices.
- **Group chat**: most social media now provide group chat functionality, and this was a dominant means of communication for most children in our sample.

4.3.1 VLOGGERS/ YOUTUBERS

In dictionary definitions, the words 'vlogger' and 'YouTuber' are somewhat interchangeable, with 'vlogger' generally referring to people who post video blogs online and 'YouTuber' referring to people posting vlogs specifically on the social platform YouTube. However, for the children in our sample there was a more nuanced distinction between the two terms that it is important to outline. The Oxford Dictionary Online defines 'YouTuber' as: **'A frequent user of the video-sharing website YouTube, especially someone who produces and appears in videos on the site[2] '**.

For the children in our sample, however, not everyone posting on YouTube could be considered a YouTuber. A YouTuber was seen as someone who made a living by posting videos online, and the term denoted something of a professional or celebrity status. Although anyone who posted video blogs on YouTube could be understood to be a 'vlogger', only famous vloggers, with many subscribers and a clear source of income from vlogging, were understood to be YouTubers.

There were some clear distinctions in the types of vlogs that different YouTubers posted (although genres were also flexible, and individual YouTubers often posted several different types of videos, or had several different YouTube channels). Some of the most popular genres are considered to be gaming, beauty and diary-style videos[3], and this was reflected in our findings.

Some of the most popular YouTubers watched by our sample are introduced in the table on the following page.

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[2] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/youtuber

[3] http://www.onvid.co.uk/what-are-vloggers-an-introduction/

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Name	Summary	Link and statistics as at August 2016	Watched by…
Zoella (Zoe Sugg) Born in 1990 British	Beauty and fashion vlogger who also makes collaborative videos with other YouTubers, including brother Joe Sugg and boyfriend Alfie Deyes. Her own beauty line, 'Zoella Beauty' launched in 2014[4] A book series, published by Penguin. Debut novel *Girl Online* became fastest-ever selling debut novel, selling 78K in first week. [5] Also famous for vlogging about her social anxiety, and in 2014 became a 'digital ambassador' for mental health charity Mind[6]	**YouTube:** 'Zoella': 11,034,101 subscribers https://www.youtube.com/user/zoella280390 **Instagram**: 94.4k followers **Twitter**: 5.76 million followers	Alice (11) Sarah (12) Carmen (15
Alfie Deyes Born in 1993 British	Has several YouTube channels showing gaming, challenges and pranks. Also known for being boyfriend of Zoella; the two make collaborative videos together. Frontman of the 'YouTube Boyband' with Joe Sugg and Caspar Lee, a parody band who don't make any music. Launched The Pointless Book series in 2014 with Blink Publishing. Activity book/journal which includes some social media activities[7].	**YouTube:** 'PointlessBlogs': 5.34 million subscribers https://www.youtube.com/user/PointlessBlog **Instagram**: 4.3 million followers **Twitter**: 3.52 million followers	Alice (11)
Thatcher Joe (Joe Sugg) Born in 1991 British	Zoella's brother, Thatcher Joe is a daily vlogger, making videos of challenges, dares and gaming. In 'YouTube Boyband' with Alfie Deyes and Caspar Lee.	**YouTube:** Thatcher Joe: 7.26 million subscribers https://www.youtube.com/user/ThatcherJoe **Instagram**: 48k followers **Twitter**: 3.8 million followers	Alice (11)
Tanya Burr Born in 1989	Fashion and beauty vlogger 2014 launched beauty line 'Tanya Burr Cosmetics' with Superdrug [8]	**YouTube**: 3.5 million subscribers	Carmen (15)

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[4] http://metro.co.uk/2014/09/29/if-you-dont-know-who-zoe-sugg-is-shes-the-girl-behind-the-biggest-beauty-launch-of-the-year-4885505/
[5] http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/30305855/zoellas-book-girl-online-outsells-jk-rowling
[6] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/09/youtube-zoella-mental-health-charity-mind
[7] http://www.thebookseller.com/news/blink-signs-youtube-star
[8] http://www.tanyaburr.co.uk/

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British	Married to weekly YouTuber Jim Chapman.	https://www.youtube.com/user/pixi2woo **Instagram**: 2.9 million followers **Twitter**: 2.1 million followers	
KSI (Olajide "JJ" Olatunji) Born in 1993 British	Rapper, posts gaming (mainly FIFA) and comedy videos on YouTube. Part of a YouTube gaming group called The Ultimate Sidemen Controversy concerning sexual harassment, previous sponsor Microsoft cut ties with him, and he was banned from the Eurogamer Expo[9]	**YouTube**: KSI: 14.2 million subscribers https://www.youtube.com/user/KSIOlajidebt **Instagram**: 3.4 million followers **Twitter:** 2.37 million followers	Ahmed (10) Callum (15)
Stampy (Joseph Garrett) Born in 1990 British	Tells stories set within Minecraft with the character Stampy Cat, in which he gives viewers ideas for gameplay. In 2014, one of the ten most-watched YouTube channels in the world[10].	**YouTube:** 7.8 million subscribers https://www.youtube.com/user/stampylonghead **Instagram:** 576k followers **Twitter:** 530k followers	Jack (10)

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[9] http://www.kotaku.com.au/2013/11/youtuber-says-he-was-censored-for-criticizing-another-youtuber/
[10] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-26327661

4.3.2 GROUP CHAT PLATFORMS

Group chat functionalities were accessed by children in our sample on the following platforms:

Platform	Brief explanation/ summary	Group chat functionality	Who was using group chat?
Facebook Messenger	Facebook Messenger is a live chat feature linked to the social media platform Facebook, also available as a separate app.[11]	▪ **Anyone** can invite new users ▪ **Anyone** can remove existing users ▪ New users **can** see prior messages	Calum (15) Robert (15) Eve (16)
WhatsApp	A messaging app using the internet to transfer information via smartphones. In 2016 WhatsApp became the most popular messaging application, with 1 billion users[12]. Bought by Facebook in 2014[13].	▪ Only '**group admin**' can invite new users ▪ Only '**group admin**' can remove existing users ▪ There can be **multiple** 'group admin'. ▪ Only '**group admin**' can assign other people to be 'group admin' ▪ New users **cannot** see prior messages	Alice (11) Llysha (13) Grant (13) Irfan (16) Eve (16)
Instagram	Social media platform originally developed for sharing photos, now with inbuilt functionality to chat to other users privately and in a group chat setting. Bought by Facebook in 2012[14].	▪ **Anyone** can invite new users ▪ **No one** can remove existing users ▪ New users **can** see prior messages	Alice (11) Calum (15) Irfan (16) Brigit (17)

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[11] http://www.pcworld.com/article/2141883/no-more-in-app-chat-facebook-moving-messages-to-messenger.html

[12] http://www.wired.com/2016/04/forget-apple-vs-fbi-whatsapp-just-switched-encryption-billion-people/

[13] http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/02/facebook-to-acquire-whatsapp/

[14] http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2012/04/facebook-buys-instagram-for-1-billion/

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5. Context matters

5.1 EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CHANGES

Key finding: The biggest changes in media behaviour are often driven by offline factors.

■ Several of the children in our sample had experienced a change in circumstance
■ Sometimes this had had a big impact on their media habits and device use
■ Changes in media habits were often just one part of a series of broader lifestyle changes in a child's life.

We observed changes in media habits driven both by external and internal factors. External factors were changes in a child's circumstance, outside their control, such as moving house or school; and internal factors related to developments in the child's cognitive capacity, taste, and social awareness. Often these factors were intrinsically linked, as children grew up and responded to new challenges in the changing world around them. The combination of factors was unique for every child, so each child had their own trajectory through the world of online media.

One child in our sample who had undergone big changes since the previous wave was Ahmed (10). In previous waves Ahmed found it difficult to engage with others. Diagnosed with ADHD, among what his mum Kerry referred to as "several other problems", he exhibited compulsive gaming habits and found it hard to express himself beyond simple sentences. In this wave, however, Ahmed had grown much calmer, and was less easily distracted and better able to engage in conversation. Kerry explained that this was because Ahmed had been receiving a lot of extra help at school, and as a result his grades and confidence had really picked up.

This had affected Ahmed's relationship with technology. He was still a big gamer, and continued to spend hours in his bedroom playing games on the Xbox. Gaming was still a solitary activity for Ahmed and he enjoyed playing his new favourite games, Call of Duty and Roblox, in single-player mode. However, in this wave Ahmed had developed a greater interest in the outside world and he had discovered some offline hobbies too. He spent more time in the park, where he played football with a couple of neighbours. He was also more engaged with his brothers, and better able to share devices with them - although his mum said this could still cause arguments and so only allowed the boys one Xbox controller.

"This house is full of sore losers"

Kerry, Ahmed's mum

Ahmed's experience demonstrates how both external and internal factors can be closely linked to a child's relationship with technology and media. We observed a change not just in his habits, but also in his media tastes. He had started to take an interest watching the gaming vlogger KSI[15] on YouTube. Although he had a fairly rudimentary understanding of the world of YouTubers, he was interested enough to watch KSI's videos regularly, and he often put them on the Xbox while waiting for games to load. He said he liked KSI because he was 'funny'.

Another child who had developed new media habits as a result of a changing lifestyle was Jack (11). Throughout the previous waves of research, Jack had been a fairly solitary child. His father

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[15] More information on vloggers and YouTubers can be found in *4. Introducing the sample*

had died shortly before the study began, and his mother had to work hard to support them both. As Jack had no siblings or friends living nearby, he was often left to entertain himself. As a result, online media (especially games like Minecraft) had always played a big part of his life.

In previous interviews Jack had been fairly inarticulate and easily distracted. But like Ahmed, this year he was much more engaged and chatty. His social world seemed to have grown to include five or six 'best friends' at school, and he played outside every day after school. His family structure had also changed over the past year, and he had been exposed to new relationships as a result. This year Jack's mum had started a relationship with a new partner, who had a son of his own. This meant that Jack's family had grown to include a new father figure and an 8- year-old step-brother, Christian. For Jack this presented new social possibilities, and media played a role in how he was learning to navigate them.

Jack was still a big fan of Minecraft and had started to share a Minecraft server with his new step-brother. He explained how he and Christian shared a mountain, which they had divided into two. Jack had never before been the 'older brother', and he seemed to be experimenting with both the caring and antagonistic elements of this role. He enjoyed sharing the game with his step-brother, but admitted that he sometimes did things that could make Christian annoyed. He described one incident in which he secretly went into his brother's half of the game, and stole and destroyed one of his swords – replacing it with a worthless piece of dirt. This was fairly inconsequential - the sword was not considered precious in the game, and he knew it was something his brother wouldn't miss. When probed he said he was helping to 'make space' for Christian, and insisted it was harmless because his brother hadn't noticed.

Not all children had developed new media habits as a result of major lifestyle changes, however. For some, their media habits had remained fairly constant throughout major lifestyle changes. For example, our youngest respondent Lily (10) had been diagnosed with autism since we last saw her. This had led to some major changes for her, most notably with her now having special 'Lily time' at school to support her in case she became anxious. Although the structure of her day in school was very different to that in previous years, she continued to exhibit much of the same media behaviour as in previous years.

She had always shown compulsive gaming habits, and this was still the case. In this wave she had a new iPad Mini, but was using it mainly to play old favourites, and as in previous years, Minecraft continued to be her most played game; she had built up 28 separate worlds in her app. Her tastes also remained similar as in previous years; she still loved reading Jaqueline Wilson, and watching CBBC, where she particularly liked the programme Newsround.

'I spend 90% of my time on the iPad on Minecraft.'

Lily, aged 10

Another child in our sample who seemed relatively resistant to change was Nadia (12). Nadia continued to have relatively young tastes for her age, and as in previous years, she spent a lot of time playing and watching The Disney Channel with her younger sister. This year she had fallen out with her peers in year 6 at school, and had instead started to play with the girls in the year below, which she said she didn't mind as she got on with them better.

'My new friends understand me better – they listen to me and don't talk over me.'

Nadia, aged 12

Nadia was facing a big change ahead with the move to secondary school. In this wave, however, the social pressures of this new environment remained distant, and Nadia continued to immerse herself in fairly childish circles for her age. She was relatively sheltered, and did not seem to be at all curious about accessing things that might interest older children, such as social media.

Key Finding: As children grow older, their media habits are increasingly driven by social factors

- As the children grew older and developed offline social circles, they were more likely to engage proactively with social media
- This was an active engagement, rather than the more passive habits of media consumption seen among younger children
- The ages at which children adopted social media varied
- Some early adopters of social media had not developed their offline social world enough to make significant use of the 'social' functions
- Those engaging proactively with social media used it as a tool for building up social worlds and their online identity

Generally speaking, as children developed an awareness of the world around them, they became more likely to engage with social media. This was much more of an active engagement with the online world, and increasingly important for some respondents as they learnt to manage multiple relationships. At the older end of the spectrum, the young people in our sample were living much of their wide and varied social lives on social media.

For example, our oldest respondent, Brigit (17), had a rich and diverse social world, spanning several social media platforms including Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and Facebook Messenger. These platforms were socially significant to her, and she saw them as an integral tool for managing her relationships. Similarly, Eve (16) was much more engaged with social media in this wave than in previous waves of research. Her friendship circle consisted of about 15 girls, and she used both Facebook Messenger and Instagram to talk to them regularly. They discussed serious matters, like the Brexit campaign, as well as more light-hearted things such as school gossip and boys, which formed an important part of Eve's social life.

'There's a few subject ones…and sometimes for a party we'll make a group chat to sort out lifts and stuff.'

Eve, aged 16

'I actually have loads of group chats and I kind of forgot….I have nine.'

Brigit, aged 17

In contrast, the younger children in our sample initially tended to engage with media for entertainment purposes, and explored the online world mainly as a way of absorbing content passively or playing games. For example, Nadia (12) experienced media very much as a passive consumer. She loved to watch The Disney Channel with her sister, which they did almost every day after school. When the two were allowed on the family computer, their habits were very similar – they watched clips on YouTube of their favourite shows – such as the Disney Channel show Girl Meets World - or played with some of the inbuilt games like Minesweeper or Paint. Nadia was not allowed on social media, and believed that her mum's rules were right in this regard. She showed no interest in breaking them, as social media was so far a relatively unknown element to her. When questioned on the subject, she repeated the instructions she had been given without criticising them:

'Children my age shouldn't have a social media account. I'm too young.'

Nadia, aged 12

Once young people started to develop their offline social worlds, they were far more likely to see social media as a tool through which they could develop relationships, and their own sense of identity. As children grew up, therefore, they became increasingly interested by the social

potential of media, and tended to engage with it more proactively, especially as their peers started to use it too.

The ages at which children in our sample engaged with social media varied, and were often highly dependent on context. For some, it began at a relatively young age; some in our sample as young as 11 used social media actively. For example, Alice (11) was an avid social media user with an Instagram account and several group chats on WhatsApp[16] . This contrasted quite starkly with Nadia, who was a year older and had yet to engage with social media at all. It seemed that this was in part due to context, as many of Alice's peers were using social media. She was in a WhatsApp group with almost everyone else in her year 5 class.

Younger people engaging with social media were more likely to have a wide circle of friends in their offline lives, and were often able to articulate the ways in which social media could increase their social capital. Alice was conscious of the ways in which online media could be used as a social tool. She regularly used Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram – on which she followed 845 people and had 316 followers in return. She was a member of many friendship groups as a result of her involvement in extra-curricular hobbies such as gymnastics and drama lessons. Her use of social media reflected this, and she had several group chats and online interactions with members of these groups, some of which included older children, and children from other schools.

For Alice, social media was a useful tool, allowing her to navigate these multiple and overlapping relationships successfully. Her engagement with social media was highly interactive and she explained it was non-stop. She said she had once received 4000 notifications in a day, which was not unlikely, given that she was engaged in multiple group chats with many members, each having ongoing conversations. She was also aware of the ways in which social media could be used to develop her offline social world; as she explained, her classmates used WhatsApp to arrange 'meet-ups':

'If you don't have WhatsApp you're missing out.'

Alice, aged 11

However, Alice was a particularly early adopter of social media, and she had been using it much more extensively than the other children in our sample of a similar age. Most of the younger respondents had signed up for social media before their social worlds had developed much beyond family and a few close friends. This meant that their social media platforms were relatively unpopulated. Initially, therefore, their engagement with social media was similar to their use of other media: fairly passive, with social media often used as just another source of entertainment.

For example, Peter (11) had signed up to Instagram, but was using it much more passively than a more avid social media user like Alice. Peter followed 178 people on Instagram, most of whom were famous footballers rather than personal friends. He occasionally posted pictures of football, and had recently posted a picture of himself with his favourite Birmingham City player, which earned him eight 'likes'. While he was proud of this picture, most of his likes were from family members and he did not consider Instagram to be a platform through which he could explore or develop relationships with others. Instead, he saw it more as a source of entertainment or information, which he consumed much in the same way he browsed for videos on YouTube or read up about a footballer he liked online.

'Instagram is quite fun for looking at pictures.'

Peter, aged 11

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[16] More information on group chat functionalities can be found in *4. Introducing the sample*

REVEALING REALITY

For many young people in our sample, social media played a broader role in identity formation. Children learned how to grow into themselves, both on and offline. For some their online identity was more important than for others. Those who were excluded from social media often expressed frustration at 'missing out' on a world that many of their peers were part of. Josie (11), for example, was barred from social media by her mum. This had become a serious bone of contention between them, and the subject of ongoing arguments. Josie became quite emotional about the subject during the interview, saying that she felt left out from an experience shared by most of her classmates.

'Everyone in the class has Instagram. Sometimes they all talk about it.'

Josie, aged 11

Josie's mum was convinced that she was protecting Josie from unnecessary social stress, as she had seen the darker side of social media for herself when she first started to use Facebook. However, Josie felt angry about being left out of a world which a lot of her peers were allowed to explore, and which she felt was bringing them all closer together, by means in which she could not participate. Josie had some ideas about why her mum might be limiting her access to Instagram, but felt these to be overblown:

'I guess she's worried I might get cyberbullied or something like that. She has a point that I could, but she is very overprotective.'

Josie, aged 11

That is not to say, however, that every child in our sample was eager to engage with social media; some took a more critical stance. For example, Llysha (13) had been exposed to social media for a couple of years when most of her peers started using it at the start of secondary school. She was uninterested in it; an introvert by nature, she was fairly unaffected by most of the social media fads in her class. Llysha said she preferred not to engage with social media as she was naturally a private person. She had a group of close friends whom she kept in touch with through group chats, but she was not at all interested in posting things in a public forum – the idea even worried her a bit.

'I don't like it when people know what I'm doing all the time. Other people want to share because they think it's a cool thing to do. I don't want to post about myself that much.'

Llysha, aged 13

Minnie (14) was similarly unengaged, as she has been throughout the previous waves of research. She was reluctant to adopt social media because she desired privacy and was openly critical of her mum's use of Facebook - as she had been in previous waves of research, when her mum had uploaded photos of Minnie onto Facebook without asking. This was something Minnie took seriously, and referred to it as a 'violation of my privacy.' Instead, she was constructing a somewhat alternative identity, primarily focusing on offline interests that she knew did not interest many of her peers, such as gangster films.

REVEALING REALITY

6. New preferences in content

Key finding: Watching the TV set is often seen as a family activity, and children rarely watch the TV set alone.

- The TV set was seen as a communal device, and watching both live and on-demand content was seen as a family activity

- Some families had regular viewing schedules to watch live broadcasts of their favourite shows, which they bonded over, and sometimes watched catch-up episodes together

- Most children did not tend to watch the TV set alone, although some did access on-demand services on their personal devices

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BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In wave 2 we observed a change in viewing habits, as on-demand or catch-up services became more common and more easily accessible for the children in our sample. We noticed an increase in family consumption of catch-up TV, while the younger children seemed to be consuming live TV content with their siblings. We also observed how 'watching TV' had become a generic term for the children in our sample, often seen as synonymous with watching content on any device.

In this wave of research, watching the TV set was seen to play more of a central role in family life, and was perceived by families as a chance to spend time together. We explored the impact of the changing role of the TV set in terms of the content that children were likely to access.

Many children in our sample had their own personal devices, which they used to explore content and social media online. These personal devices were hugely important for some respondents, and most spent a lot of time using them alone. For example, Alice (11) had her own iPad, which, she explained, she was on '24/7', as well as her own smartphone, which she used every day. She had recently broken her previous phone on holiday in Spain and had immediately bought a new one.

'I can't live without my phone.'

Alice, aged 11

Similarly, Grant (13) spent a lot of time on his smartphone, and took it to bed with him so he could watch YouTube or play games until 11.30 at night.

'My phone is almost always near me.'

Grant, aged 13

We observed that the TV set, by contrast, was seen as more of a communal device, and watching live or on-demand content on the TV set was more of a family activity. For the majority of families in our sample, the TV set occupied a central position in a communal room – generally

the living room. Compared to smaller, portable devices, which tended to be owned, carried around and used by just one person, the TV set was static and shared. As such, TV watching was seen to be much more of a family activity, and one that brought family members together.

Some families watched a regular show each week, and this was something of a bonding ritual for family members. William (12) had a started to watch a selection of weekly programmes in the evenings with his family. The shows screened regularly, and William knew the schedule by heart: Suits on a Monday, Blind Spot on a Tuesday, The Good Wife on a Thursday and Gogglebox on a Friday.

As William was one of six siblings, it was unusual that the whole family would sit down to watch every episode. Instead, family members would drop in and out depending on whatever else they were doing. Nevertheless, the schedule was observed despite fluctuating attendance, and William knew that the only night they didn't have something scheduled was Wednesday. He especially liked watching Suits, and would watch this with his parents after his younger sisters had gone to bed.

'Wednesday is boring, because there's nothing on.'

William, aged 12

Bonding with family members over a programme was also something we saw among the older respondents in our sample. For example, Brigit (17) and her dad had recently started watching Peaky Blinders together. This was a show that Brigit's mum didn't like, so the two tended to stream a couple of episodes on demand in the evenings after Brigit's mum had gone to bed. They took the communal aspect of this quite seriously, and both had decided that neither was allowed to 'skip ahead' by watching an episode without the other.

In some cases, the social aspect of watching TV together was more important than the content itself. This was especially true in cases when TV watching was one of the main activities family members did together. For example, Josie (11) was an only child, and had been living with her mother since her parents divorced. Watching live TV was an opportunity for the two to spend some time together when Josie's mum was not working. In the mornings they tended to watch the news together over breakfast, and in the evenings Josie's mum would choose something that happened to be on. Josie explained that she felt she should keep her mum company, even though she didn't necessarily like the programmes her mum chose. If she really didn't enjoy the programme, she would go upstairs alone to watch Netflix on her iPad instead.

'Mum chooses boring stuff to watch.'

Josie, aged 11

This trend meant that children were unlikely to be watching the TV set alone, and were more likely to be watching it with parents or siblings. Some, as in Josie's case, accessed on-demand services alone on their personal devices. However, watching on-demand programmes on the TV set was still often a family activity, as in the case of Brigit and her dad.

Key finding: Young people tend to 'jump' from watching children's to adults' content on broadcast TV

- Some children went from watching child content with siblings, to adult content with parents
- Parents were less concerned with the adult content their child watched on their TV sets, as this was generally consumed in a shared family setting

As young people tended to watch the TV set with their parents or siblings, they were likely to be watching either 'child' or 'adult' content. We observed in some children a sudden shift in

viewing patterns from 'child' to 'adult' content as they grew up. This shift often occurred when children switched from watching their TV sets with younger siblings to watching with parents.

Nadia (12), for example, watched the Disney Channel with her younger sister every day after school until dinner. They both loved the series Girl Meets World, and the two would also watch clips of this show on YouTube when it was not being shown on TV. They also watched other content on The Disney Channel, such as the Disney film The Descendants. Watching programmes with her younger sister meant that Nadia was more likely to consume 'child' content than 'adult' content.

In contrast, respondents who watched content on their TV sets with their parents tended to consume more 'adult' content, and many started doing this at a younger age. For example, Josie (11) watched BBC News with her mum every morning before school. This was not something she would choose to do alone, and she didn't especially enjoy it:

> *'The News is boring, and there's never any happy news.'*
>
> *Josie, aged 11*

Some of the adult content that young people watched on TV with their parents could be fairly complex, with borderline 'inappropriate' themes. However, this did not seem to be a source of concern for parents in our sample, and it was generally considered acceptable when the content was consumed in a family setting. William's (12) favourite show, Suits, had a relatively adult plot line, focusing on themes such as careers, sex and money. It was broadcast after 10 pm, and William would probably not have started watching if it weren't for the fact that he was watching with his family. However, he was enjoying it, and his parents did not worry about the adult nature of the content. As they were watching it with him, they could intervene or explain if anything disturbed him.

Some parents enjoyed the communal aspect of watching live TV with their children, but would still take steps to protect their children from too much adult content. For example, Alice (11) watched live TV regularly with her parents in the evenings. If anything inappropriate came on, such as something with a lot of swearing, Alice's parents would send her to her room. They liked being able to monitor what she was watching, and Alice in turn didn't seem to mind, as she tended to go and play on her iPad in her room instead. Overall, parents in our sample were more likely to express concern about personal devices rather than shared ones like the family TV (as discussed further in Chapter 7: Changes in parental regulation).

Children's consumption of content on the TV set was therefore dominated by either child or adult content. For 'teen' content, children generally turned to their portable devices, particularly to YouTube.

6.2 THE ROLE OF YOUTUBE & VLOGGING

Key finding: YouTube is an extremely popular source of teen content for most children, with YouTubers popular across our sample.

- YouTubers were a particularly important source of teen content, and many young people in our sample watched YouTubers regularly
- Most were watching this content alone, using their personal devices

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In Wave 1 we explored the role of YouTube for the children in our sample. We found that YouTube was a go-to place for most children, for entertainment as well as for searching for information or tutorials on creative hobbies like making loom bands or making worlds in Minecraft.

Although some of these specific creative hobbies have now fallen out of fashion, we found this year that YouTube continues to be an extremely popular source of content for children in our sample. In previous years some children in our sample were watching YouTubers like Zoella and Joe Weller, and this year, the popularity of these vloggers had not waned.

Many young people in our sample considered YouTube to be a primary source of entertainment, and tended to access it using their personal devices. For some respondents, this meant that they could watch programmes alone, which gave them more freedom of choice, and relative privacy, when deciding what to watch. They didn't have to compromise on what they wanted to watch and were therefore more likely to watch content appealing to their specific age group when watching on a private device, rather than on a TV set.

Most popular amongst YouTube content were YouTubers. The majority of people in our sample could name some of the most famous YouTubers, and some watched their videos regularly, or even aspired to create video diaries themselves. Many of the younger girls in our sample were regularly watching the YouTube vlogger Zoella[17]. Carmen (15), Sarah (12), and Alice (11) were all subscribers to her channel, and were particularly interested in her beauty and style videos, although each had slightly different viewing habits.

Beauty was something of a hobby for Carmen (15), and she had spent time looking up different beauty channels on YouTube. Zoella was one of her favourite beauty vloggers, but she also liked Lush Leah and Dulce Candy, and she was a big fan of the Floral Beauty YouTube channel. She liked watching 'unboxing' videos – showing products being unpackaged for the first time and reviewed. Carmen said her favourite of these were videos showing subscription boxes from the beauty brand 'Sweet Sparkle ', as she was especially interested in the beauty products inside. She had even looked into getting a Sweet Sparkle[18] subscription for herself, but found that at $21 per month (shipped from the USA), it was more than her pocket money allowed.

'I love YouTube'

Carmen, aged 15

Sarah (12) had been a big fan of Zoella throughout the previous waves of research. In this wave, she still loved Zoella's beauty videos and beauty videos in general, but was not really interested in any other YouTubers. She didn't subscribe to any particular channels, but liked to search for simple beauty tutorials in the YouTube search bar and browse through the results. She didn't attempt many of these tutorials, but enjoyed watching them for their own sake. Sarah had also got into the popular make-up technique 'contouring' recently, and would look up contouring tips and tricks on YouTube.

Slightly younger, Alice, (11) said she enjoyed watching YouTubers as she was interested in both the style and the social aspect of the videos. She had recently decided that she wanted to be a beauty shopper, and took a particular interest in the products that Zoella promoted and used. She especially liked the 'Challenges' and 'Halls' vlogs, where she could watch Zoella go shopping

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[17] More information on vloggers and YouTubers can be found in *4. Introducing the sample*
[18] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAFswQzltnc for an example

for clothes and fashion items. She was able to name most of these products, although she didn't have any of them herself. After watching the latest vlog updates from Zoella, Alice tended to scroll down the 'recommended videos' list on YouTube, where she was often recommended 'Life Hack' or hairstyling videos.

'On YouTube there are so many different things. People do the randommest videos. I just watch random videos really.'

Alice, aged 11

Alice was also aware of Zoella's educational aspect. She explained that Zoella would sometimes give advice on her vlogs about specific issues. She described a recent episode in which Zoella explored social anxiety for teenagers. Alice said this was not something that applied to her specifically, but she thought it was good for some people.

'Other girls might learn from Zoella's advice'

Alice, aged 11

Another reason Alice liked watching YouTubers was because they offered her a window into the lives of other young people, that she might not be able to see elsewhere. She spent a lot of time watching videos that YouTubers posted about fairly mundane aspects of their lives, such as 'The Morning Routine'. Alice had tried to make one of these videos herself, but said she realised hers was boring and she didn't want anyone from school to find it, so she took it down.

For Alice and other respondents, YouTubers seemed to be entertaining, comforting and aspirational. They provided a taste of what it might be like to live away from home for the first time, and they explored the kinds of issues that adolescents might have to deal with. Alice loved this content and seemed to find it fairly addictive, checking regularly to see if there were any new uploads. Her parents felt that the content was largely appropriate, and didn't feel the need to oversee her. However, her dad did express concern that she might be "spending so much time watching other people's lives she forgets to live her own."

Others in our sample indicated that they might have developed slightly addictive habits with regard to YouTube. For example, Llysha (13), who spent a lot of time on her personal laptop, said she had subscribed to 26 different channels. Most of these were gameplay videos of The Sims, Llysha's favourite game, and she would watch these fairly compulsively when not playing the game itself. Similarly, Grant (13) explained that he often ended up spending a lot of time browsing YouTube without realising, as the 'recommended videos' section always tempted him to stay for another video.

'You see the recommended videos and keep on clicking on them. Before you know it time goes by.'

Grant (13)

6.3 FAVOURITE CHARACTERS

Key finding: Children often look up to characters they see in their favourite content

- The content young people watched had a strong influence on the kinds of characters they admired
- This sometimes indicated whether a child was consuming more child or adult content
- Some children in our sample chose to admire people based on their achievements in the offline world

Young people had access to a broad range of sources, both online and on broadcast TV. Their viewing habits often had a strong influence on the kind of characters they looked up to, and for

some respondents, this was indicative as to whether they were consuming more 'child' or 'adult' content.

For example, Nadia (11) had relatively young tastes for her age. She loved watching the Disney Channel with her younger sister, and was a big fan of the show Girl Meets World. Her favourite character in the show was Sabrina Carpenter, a character with youthful, girly appeal, typical of the kinds of characters that Nadia liked. She also liked the pop stars Ariana Grande and Justin Bieber, who have similar appeal. Nadia said she wanted to be famous when she grows up, and looked to these stars for inspiration.

'I want to become a film star and make lots of films.'

Nadia, aged 12

When role-playing with her younger sister, Nadia often chose to play characters who reflected her own taste. For example, she explained how she liked to play characters like Evie in The Descendants – a Disney character who is into fashion and beauty. This was in contrast to her younger sister, who usually selected more mischievous characters, like Mal from the same show.

On the other end of the spectrum, William (12) said his favourite character was Harvey Spector from Suits. This choice – a lawyer working in mergers and acquisitions in New York - was a more grown-up persona than Nadia's Disney character, and reflective of the fact that William watches a lot more 'adult' content on TV than Nadia does. William had started to look up to this character, and said he would like to become a lawyer when he grew up – in part because he thought that this would be a good way to earn a lot of money. His dad had advised him he'd have to study English and Law in the coming years in order to make that dream a reality, and William was seriously considering this.

Young people seeking to develop alternative identities sometimes looked further afield for their role models, and this was not necessarily based on what they saw on TV or social media. Some of the respondents in our sample showed an interest in people based on their achievements in the offline world. This was sometimes quite different to their friends' favourite characters or role models.

For example, Minnie (14) had continued to develop an interest in arthouse cinema, and Quentin Tarantino was one of her favourite directors. She had been helped to cultivate this interest by her father, who shared her love of gore and gangster films. However, she had also taken the initiative to seek them out for herself, and watched a lot of films alone. Minnie was also becoming increasingly interested in music, especially folk music by Bob Dylan and Tom Petty. This was also something she shared with her father, but again she pursued this beyond what he showed her, and chose to seek out documentaries about her favourite artists on BBC iPlayer or Netflix. She was aware that her tastes were quite different from those of her peers, but felt secure in what she liked, and did not feel a pressure to change to fit in to more mainstream ideals.

Similarly, Robert (15) admired characters as a result of their achievements in the offline world. He said one of the people he most admired was Kieran Tierney, a rising star playing for Celtic football club. Robert admired this player because he knew something of the story behind his success. Aged just 19, Tierney was a figure Robert could relate to; he liked the fact that Tierney never 'shies away from anything'. He also liked Tierney because of the honest persona he presented, and admired him because of his rags-to-riches story.

'Tierney is a nice guy and he came from nothing.'

Robert, aged 15

7. Changes in parental regulation

Key finding: The TV set is less-controlled than other devices

- Watching the TV set was often seen as a valued family activity
- Parents did not worry about restricting time spent watching the TV set, as they were aware of their children's viewing habits and valued time spent together as a family
- 'Screen time' usually referred to other devices, which children were generally using alone
- Concern about screen time was often due to impact this had on the child's mood and behaviour, rather than the amount of hours they were spending on the device

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In Wave 2 we observed that parents were often worried about their children seeing violent or inappropriate content online. In this wave, although some parents were still concerned about these things, the concern seemed to have shifted towards the risks of social media and online privacy.

While we saw in previous waves that some parents lacked confidence in their ability to monitor or regulate their children online, and reacted to problems only as they arose, in this wave most parents were more secure in their abilities to intervene if necessary, and had devised more general patterns of monitoring their children.

In wave 1 we observed how each parent might have a different set of rules about what a child is allowed to access online. The trend continues in this wave of research, especially marked among parents who have separated.

Parents were generally aware of when their children were watching broadcast TV, and what they were watching. As most families watched broadcast TV together, this tended to be seen as a family activity, to be preserved. It was also unlikely to be the main activity in a child's day - they were more likely to be using other devices. Regulated 'screen time' for most families seemed to refer to screens other than the TV screen, such as games consoles, laptops and smartphones, which children were using alone.

'Screen time' was likely to be considered an issue if the child was using a device compulsively, or if their media habits were impacting significantly on family time. Some screens were more regulated than others, and there was usually one predominant device that parents were concerned with.

For example, screen-time in Peter's household referred to the Xbox, as this device, which he used often to play FIFA, was the one which intruded most into other areas of his life. He was supposed to be following a 'one hour on, one hour off' rule on the Xbox, which was capped at 3-4 hours a day. He was not allowed to play on the Xbox on weekday mornings, as this had been making him late for school. Peter's dad said he was trying to encourage Peter to learn how to self-regulate his time on the Xbox, in order to "instil good habits in the future".

Parents' primary concerns were normally about how screen time was affecting their child's mood and behaviour, rather than merely the amount of time spent in front of a screen. Parents

tended to justify limitations on screen time if a particular device was making their child withdrawn, or affecting their attitude significantly.

For example, Peter's parents were not overly worried about his tendency to play on the Xbox, as he was sporty and had a lot of outdoor hobbies, including playing for the local football team. However, the device was becoming an issue for Peter when it distracted him from other things. In this instance it was not the screen itself that his parents were worried about, but Peter's attitude. They explained that when Peter got too absorbed he began to get angry when he was losing. His dad encouraged him to recognise these signs in himself, and to take a break when he felt himself getting wound up. Both Peter and his sister had an iPad, but these were not regulated in the same way. Peter spent his mornings watching videos on his iPad at the breakfast table, and did not have a problem getting to school on time.

Similarly, Llysha's (13) parents were concerned about her laptop, as it had started to cause her to withdraw from the family somewhat. Her use of it had recently become quite obsessive and she had started playing The Sims and watching YouTube videos – often of The Sims gameplay – for hours each day after school. Llysha said she felt really stressed at school, and so needed this time to unwind and clear her head. Her mum supported this, and said she let her daughter play more as a result. However, she had become concerned on a recent occasion where Llysha's laptop had broken and Llysha's behaviour had become irritable, which her mum said was totally uncharacteristic. She worried that her daughter was showing signs of addictive behaviour. In order to regulate this, she had limited her daughter's screen time to six hours a day, and encouraged her to engage with other things.

'She was climbing the walls without her laptop.'

Llysha's mum

As Llysha's parents had four children, they found it useful to set some general limits on screen time around the house. They had set up an automated system, which limited internet access in their household to six hours a day, in an effort to impose some boundaries on their children's media use. Llysha and her three siblings unanimously agreed that this was annoying, and wished they could have longer. The family had a group on WhatsApp, and most of the time this was flooded by requests from the children to get the internet time extended or turned back on.

In contrast, none of the parents in our sample had set strict rules about the amount of TV their child could watch. Often the TV was seen as an alternative for children when asked to come off their primary device. Ahmed, for example, admitted he would only watch the TV when he had been told he had to stop playing on his Xbox, or if he was really bored.

'I only watch TV if I have nothing to play'

Ahmed, aged 10

Key finding: Parents are more likely to regulate smartphones, as these tend to be the device their children use most.

■ Most parents chose to regulate smartphones, because this was the device their child used most
■ Smartphones were not always the most regulated device; in some cases parents were more concerned about games consoles or other personal devices

In general, the parents in our sample were most concerned about regulating the device that their child was using most. In this wave, more children than in previous years had smartphones, and those with smartphones were using them more frequently than before. Parents were also

concerned about other devices if their child used them a lot - for example, games consoles, especially among the younger boys in our sample.

One of the factors generating concern among parents was how their child's online activity could be hidden from them; as devices become smaller and more portable, children tend to carry them around with them and use them privately. Consequently, a lot of media use happens out of sight of a parent. Many respondents, such as Grant (13) and Llysha (13), browsed on their smartphone in bed before going to sleep.

As a result, there was increased potential for young people to access inappropriate content online without a parent knowing. Many parents in our sample, therefore, had become more concerned with regulating smartphones than other devices, and had devised various methods for doing so.

Calum's (15) mum, for example, conducted an 'electronics sweep' at bedtime, and confiscated his phone every night before bed, a technique she had been using throughout the waves of research. She remained convinced that Calum would stay awake long into the night browsing on his phone, and might stumble upon inappropriate content. She was also suspicious that mobile technology might cause as yet unknown health problems, and was eager that her son did not sleep near his phone. Calum admitted that he sometimes got up during the night to browse Facebook or Instagram when he was not tired enough to sleep.

Key finding: Parents have developed a range of strategies for monitoring their child's activity on their personal devices

- Parents generally monitored their child's activities online, and they tended to worry about their child accessing social media and inappropriate content
- Some parents had two different sets of rules for their child – especially if they were divorced

The majority of parents explained that they did not worry, as long as they had a clear idea about what their children were doing online. Most had arranged to 'check' their children's technology every so often so they could keep an eye on their child's media use, and make sure nothing was getting out of hand. For example, Ahmed's mum, Kerry, regularly checked her children's browsing history on their various devices so she could be sure of what they were up to.

'I am very 'on' what my child is up to.'

Kerry, Ahmed's Mum

Many parents felt more comfortable when their children were using their devices in communal spaces, so they could keep an eye on them as they explored the internet. Some had even devised rules or strategies for keeping their children, and their children's devices, in plain sight. Grant's mum explained how she had strategically placed the household computer in the living room, so she could drop in and have a look at what Grant was watching while she cooked dinner in the kitchen next door. She explained how Grant and his brother had been pestering her for years to get a games console in their shared bedroom, but she had refused on the grounds that she would be less likely to know what they were up to, and that they would be less likely to spend time with the family if confined to their room.

'I've been strategic about where I put technology in the house. I don't want to have to yell upstairs if I need help with a chore.'

Grant's mum

Some parents explained that they would worry more if their child became protective of their technology, or secretive about what they were doing. For example, Alice's (11) dad was happy that his daughter tended to use her iPad in the living room. He often overheard what she was

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watching and felt confident that he would be able to intervene if she started watching something inappropriate.

'I can see what she's up to - she's not hiding.'

Alice's dad

Similarly, Llysha's (13) mum explained that she worried less about her daughter online as she was trustworthy and open. If she became secretive, her mum said she would notice the behaviour change, and investigate further. She did occasionally check her daughter's technology, which Llysha didn't mind as she felt her mother had a right to know what she was doing.

'If mum needs to check that must mean I've been doing something wrong.'

Llysha, aged 13

Browsing history and social media were predominantly the main concerns for parents when regulating their children's smartphone. Some parents (Ahmed's, Josie's and Llysha's) had forbidden social media altogether. Among those that allowed it, most had some concerns or reservations relating to their children using it, although these varied from family to family.

Llysha's mum had initially allowed her daughter to get Facebook, as she thought Llysha was mature for her age, and didn't think she would have any problems with it. However, shortly after letting her daughter set it up, she realised that a lot of her adult relatives were posting inappropriate content on their profiles. Llysha's dad was Jamaican, and many of his siblings lived in Jamaica. They were posting photos and videos of nights out, which appeared on Llysha's news feed. Llysha's mum was especially concerned about the raunchy nature of the dancing, and asked Llysha to close the account. Llysha said did not mind too much about this, as she wasn't really using the platform anyway.

Occasionally parents had conflicting rules for the same child, especially if they were divorced. Sometimes this caused confusion for children, although for the most part they tended to be clear on the different expectations of each parent. Josie (11) said her mum was much stricter than her dad, and she found this frustrating. As previously mentioned, Josie's mum was worried about the risks of social pressure coming from social media, and believed that forbidding social media would be an effective way to mitigate this risk. This was because she had seen some unpleasant online encounters first-hand, and felt her daughter was too young to be able to deal with this kind of social pressure. Josie's dad was much more relaxed, and would have allowed Josie to have a social media account if her mum had agreed. However, Josie's mum argued that it was not her daughter's behaviour that she worried about, but the things she might be exposed to online.

'It's not that I don't trust Josie – I don't trust people.'

Josie's mum

Ahmed (10) also faced conflicting expectations from his parents. Ahmed's mum, especially, was concerned about grooming. She felt that there was a lack of understanding among parents about the risks of grooming, for young boys in particular. This was in contrast with Ahmed's dad, who did not worry to same extent. When Ahmed had been to visit his dad recently, his cousin had shown him how to set up an Instagram account, so he had a profile with a few photos. Ahmed's mum only realised during the course of the interview that this had happened, and explained to Ahmed that she did not want him to use it. Ahmed was frustrated, insisting he would keep it private, but his mum said she would not accept this and he would have to delete the account.

8.   Changes in critical thinking

8.1 SEARCHING ONLINE

Key finding: Children are more likely to evaluate the trustworthiness of information when searching for a specific purpose

- Children were not concerned with source trustworthiness when looking for entertainment
- Children were more likely to consider source trustworthiness when looking for information
- Children were most concerned with assessing sources when looking for information for their homework, as they were worried about getting the answers wrong
- Most children relied on websites recommended by the school when completing homework
- Children had a range of strategies for assessing the trustworthiness of their sources
- Most had a partial understanding of the ways in which the internet worked, and few understood that search results might be generated by algorithms rather than conscious agents

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BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In previous waves of research, we observed how children had different methods of searching for information, some defaulting to YouTube, Siri or image searches. We saw that children tended to browse only when looking for specific information, and so were unlikely to stumble across new content online. In this wave we observed increased levels of general browsing on YouTube.

In previous waves, as in this wave, we observed children defaulting to clicking on the first result yielded by a search. Children had mainly developed their own criteria for assessing whether a website was trustworthy, including branding or design. We observed similar assessments this year.

The young people in our sample only stopped to consider the sources of their information in particular circumstances, if they felt that the situation demanded it. When browsing for entertainment, such as watching videos or playing games, children did not devote much thought to the sources of their information, as they were looking for amusement rather than accuracy.

For example, Grant (13) browsed YouTube every day after school on his dad's computer. He tended to look things up impulsively, and liked to watch videos of world record attempts, and the occasional music video shown to him by his brother. He had also recently started to develop an interest in magic, and had been watching videos of street magicians and trying to master their tricks. Notably, although he knew the names of several street magicians, he would never search for these directly and would instead type key words such as 'card trick' into the search bar. He was not especially interested in the source of this information, and said he did not consider YouTube trustworthy. He used the platform as a source of amusement rather than as content to be analysed.

'I just look up random stuff on YouTube.'

Grant, aged 13

Children were more likely to consider the trustworthiness of online sources when looking specifically for information, and even then, only in certain circumstances. Across the sample, children seemed to be most concerned with the sources of their online information when

searching in connection with homework. Most explained they would be worried about getting the wrong answer, especially for marked or assessed work, and so were more critical of the information they came across. For example, Llysha (13) was highly conscientious about her school work, and her main concern about accessing information for school was that it might not be right.

'The internet can be wrong.'

Llysha, aged 13

Like others in our sample, Llysha had devised a range of strategies to assess the trustworthiness of online sources when searching for information for homework. She tended to trust sites specifically recommended by school, and if working to a deadline, she would double-check her information with friends, to see if it sounded right, or if they had found the same answers. Llysha had even set up a WhatsApp group for her whole class, for the specific purpose of discussing homework (see Chapter 9: New social possibilities online for more information on group chat).

The majority of our sample trusted sites that had been recommended by their school, especially if this was for a specific piece of work. We saw a high level of trust in BBC Bitesize; this was often recommended as a revision tool by schools for children of all ages. Some children explained that the information on BBC Bitesize was more likely to be correct, as they saw the BBC as a known and trustworthy body.

For example, Grant had a high level of trust in the BBC Bitesize website, as it had been recommended at school. During fieldwork, researchers asked him the question: "How bad is global warming?" Grant went straight to the BBC Bitesize website rather than using a search engine. He entered the keywords 'global warming' and was satisfied, when the results came up, that they would contain the relevant information.

'I trust BBC Bitesize. Most teachers say to use it for revision.'

Grant, aged 13

Similarly, Eve (16) said she found BBC News to be one of the most trustworthy sources of information around, and had a high level of trust in the organisation more generally. She had recently had to do a lot of research online into the Iraq war for revision for her History GCSE exams, and said she found BBC Bitesize and Historylearning.org to be very trustworthy sources for this.

When accessing a site not explicitly recommended by the school, children used a range of strategies to assess the quality of the information. Many of the children had devised rules of thumb to quickly gauge the quality of the content they were accessing. These techniques were often based on instinct, and did not necessarily reflect a full understanding of the ways in which the online world works.

For example, William (12) said he would find a website more trustworthy if it ended in '.org' rather than '.com'. He explained that when teachers provided a list of links for homework, the trusted sources they provide are generally '.org'. He was also aware that 'org' referred to organisation, and so was less likely to be information posted by an individual.

'.org websites are harder to get. Anyone can get a .com or a .co.uk.'

William, aged 12

Llysha (13) believed that the more recently something had been posted, the more accurate it would be, so she checked the dates of websites or posts to see how recently they had been made. Sarah (12) thought that searches with fewer results were more likely to be accurate. She preferred

'Simple Wikipedia'[19], a version of the online encyclopaedia 'Wikipedia', which presents information in clear, simplified English. Sarah felt this to be more trustworthy as she believed that if it contained simpler, less in-depth information, it was more likely to have the 'right' answer. Josie (11) was aware that she might find different answers to the same question when searching online, but was not sure how to assess the quality of information. When probed, she said she supposed she could work out which was more likely to be true based on how many people were accessing the site, but had no idea how to do this in practice.

> *'You never know if the internet is trustworthy or not.'*
>
> *Josie, aged 11*

For the most part, respondents were unable to explain exactly why these indications would make a site more trustworthy. This was often due to a limited understanding of the internet in general. Across our sample we observed that most young people were unclear how information came to be on the internet. Most were not aware of any automatic or algorithmic process in generating search engine results, and tended instead to humanise their search engine, assuming that the top result had been selected as part of a conscious process.

When probed further, most children could not explain exactly how they thought this process would work, but a few had theories. For example, Josie (11) believed that Google staff were responsible for putting the right information online:

> *'The experts tell the people who work at Google and then Google puts it on the internet.'*
>
> *Josie, aged 11*

Similarly, Callum suspected that the top results on Google searches were likely to be chosen by some kind of Google staff 'controller', who would judge the best answer based on verifying facts from several different websites. Irfan (16) had a similar view, and assumed that dedicated websites must be written by experts in the field, who did this - benevolently - to help others.

Key finding: Some online searching methods obscure the source of information

- Some online searching methods produced information without clearly labelling sources or authors
- Some children relied on short-cut methods of searching, which meant they were more likely to disregard the source of the information
- The most source-literate children seemed to be applying lessons they had learnt at school to assess trustworthiness

Many children were searching using media aggregators, social media or Google's 'Snippet'[20] function – a feature of Google search which displays a section of a relevant webpage at the top of a search result. These methods tend to produce information without clearly navigating to, or labelling, the source or author, which could make it more difficult to judge how trustworthy the information is.

During the search exercise set by researchers in this project, several of the children lifted the answers to questions directly from the 'Snippet' search. Researchers chose to ask questions to which answers would be debatable, in order to gain insight into the thought processes of respondents. When posed the question: "What is the healthiest food?" Eve (16) chose to rely on the snippet search for her answer, despite seeing that the search had offered several alternative options. She noticed that the Snippet answer presented was lemons, and said that

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[19] https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

[20] A function of the search engine Google that offers a short 'snippet' answer, often one sentence or image, in one of the top results for a search.

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this must be right. Her initial guess (broccoli), had come up on several results too, but she decided that the Google Snippet would most likely be the 'right' answer.

'I would have thought broccoli, but Google says lemons.'

Eve, aged 16

Others in our sample also relied heavily on Google Snippet for their information, but not all took the top result at face value, and some were applying a degree of critical assessment to this information. For example, Carmen (15) used Google Snippet regularly, especially when looking for an easy answer. However, when posed the same research question as Eve: 'what is the healthiest food?' she replied 'broccoli' after seeing that this was a result offered by more than one source. She said if it appeared more than once, she thought it was more likely to be true, despite what the Snippet said.

We noticed that the children who were most source-literate tended to be applying knowledge they had picked up at school. Most of the children studying history or related disciplines, like sociology, had learnt about sources and bias in their lessons. They were generally applying this understanding to online information, and seemed to be better equipped to assess online information than their peers who were not studying these subjects.

For example, Eve (16) was studying History, and going on to pursue it for her A Levels next year, alongside Classics and English. She had learnt a lot about sources and bias in school, and liked to apply these when looking for information online. Unlike many other respondents in our sample, she did not distrust user-generated content, and instead considered it as a useful source of information in the right context. One of her favourite means to search was Yahoo Answers, which she liked as it offered her a means to access information from multiple sources, and an opportunity to gain insight into several sides of a debate.

In a similar vein, Grant (13) had a good understanding that sources online could be biased. He said he had learnt about this concept at school. But unlike Eve, he was not able to see how this information could still be useful for him. Instead, he tended to distrust user-generated content on the internet, such as Wikipedia, because 'you can edit it.'

'Anyone can make a webpage'

Grant, aged 13

8.2 COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

Key finding: Young people are more aware of product endorsements than in previous waves of research, partly due to exposure through watching YouTubers.

- All the children in our sample knew that posting videos on YouTube could generate income
- Most understood that product endorsements were how YouTubers made money, but were unclear on the exact details
- A few knew that social capital was commercially valuable, as 'likes' and 'subscribers' equated to the worth of a YouTuber, and were able to explain why this was desirable for a brand
- Some aspired to post videos online themselves, but few expected this to become a source of income
- Few children were critical of the online personas presented by YouTubers, or were aware that these images might be cultivated for commercial gain

Among our sample, many children were aware that posting vlogs and videos on YouTube could generate income. Most had heard stories of someone their age who had started to make money through posting things online. This was true even of children who were not especially interested

in these things themselves. For example, Minnie (14), although not particularly interested in watching vlogs on YouTube, knew a classmate who had started to post videos in which she dubbed anime series. Her channel had become popular, receiving 700 subscribers. Minnie was able to explain clearly how her classmate made money by hosting adverts on the site, and had extrapolated from this that many of the products endorsed by other YouTubers were probably sponsorship in some form or another.

Similarly, Robert (15) had a fairly clear idea of the way in which vlogging might work commercially, despite not being a huge fan of vlogging himself. He had recently noticed a phase whereby vloggers were promoting the exchange of FIFA coins (used internally in gameplay in FIFA) for cash. Robert said that FIFA had issued a statement saying that it disagreed with this practice, and after this vloggers stopped promoting it. He was not sure of the causality of these events, but the situation gave him a clear idea of how endorsement might work through those channels.

Most children who watched vlogging videos themselves were fairly clear that vloggers made money through sponsorship and product endorsements. Alice (11) had an especially good understanding of the way in which advertising worked on YouTube, probably because she watched it so often. She was aware that brands were likely to pay people to mention their products on their channels, and aware that advertisers would therefore be interested in the amount of subscribers a channel had.

> *'Some brands sponsor YouTube and sometimes they pay people to talk about them. If they have a lot of subscribers a lot of people will see it.'*
>
> *Alice, aged 11*

Carmen (15) also had a clear understanding of the ways in which advertising and product endorsements worked. This was in part owing to her interest in beauty vlogging, where the link between video and product endorsement was fairly explicit. As mentioned previously, she was also interested in 'unboxing' videos, showing products being unpackaged and reviewed for the first time. Again, the commercial link behind these videos was fairly clear to her.

Similarly, Sarah (12) was fully aware that YouTubers like Zoella were paid by the brand they were endorsing. However, she assumed that Zoella was able to choose the brands she recommended, and so felt it was still a fair reflection of Zoella's character. Compared to other children in our sample, Sarah was particularly able to see things from the brand's point of view.

> *'Well it's a good opportunity for them to advertise not just on the TV. And I prefer to watch Zoella than an advert for the same thing on TV – so it's actually better than an advert.'*
>
> *Sarah, aged 12*

Even children with an otherwise limited knowledge of digital media understood that vloggers were making money somehow. For example, Ahmed (10) had a fairly limited understanding of the ways in which the online world functioned. He had only ever watched one YouTuber – KSI. Despite this, he had an understanding that 'likes' and 'subscribers' on KSI's channel were linked to the ways in which KSI would be making money. He was not exactly sure how this worked, and supposed people must send him money in exchange for the videos he made. He thought he might send KSI money himself one day, but wasn't sure how to as he didn't know 'where KSI lives'.

Some even aspired to make videos themselves, although most did not see it as a likely source of income. For the most part, it was more seen as something you might as well try, rather than a serious commercial ambition. For example, both Peter (11) and Robert (15) were avid FIFA players, and each had supposed they might make a FIFA video one day. However, neither had

got around to it, and commercial gain was not mentioned as a primary motivation for either; they focused more on their love of the game.

Some had a good understanding that the persona of an online personality could be worth something, especially if they followed social media regularly. For example, Alice knew to look for a 'blue tick' next to the name of a famous person on Instagram, as this was a mark of authentication.

'There are a lot of fakers on Instagram.'

Alice, aged 11

However, despite having a relatively clear understanding of product sponsorship and the value of celebrity endorsement, most children were not at all aware of the ways in which YouTubers and other celebrities might be curating their own image as part of a commercial proposition. Most tended to accept YouTuber personalities at face value, assuming that they were able to post anything they liked, and that the videos they saw would be a fair reflection of an individual personality. They did not consider the ways in which this might be tied to a wider brand, style or positioning.

Key finding: Children do not always develop or display critical awareness in a linear progression

The children in our sample have not displayed a linear progression in critical awareness as they have grown older. We have seen in our tracking questions that although children tend to pick up information as they grow (such as Ahmed, 10, now being able to describe that a digital virus is bad for a computer), there are some things about the online world that remain elusive, or are forgotten between one year and the next. For example, the majority of the children have been unable to explain what an IP address is, in each wave of the research, and the question has not prompted any of them to try to find out.

And while children generally pick up skills over time, they don't necessarily apply them. We observed how sometimes the role of content, in helping them to shape their identities and fit in socially, might override their desire to make critical judgements. For instance, Irfan (16) followed a lot of his favourite celebrities on Instagram. This had heavily shaped his views of their personalities and lifestyles, and he was not especially critical about why they might be uploading certain types of content onto their social media accounts.

Interestingly, Irfan seems to have become less critical of celebrity personalities over time. Whereas in previous waves he was disgusted that Chris Brown had attacked Rihanna, in this wave he said he thought Chris Brown was "probably a nice guy". Despite remembering the incident, he had been following Chris Brown on Instagram, and felt that the content he uploaded was probably a fair reflection of his personality and lifestyle. He had similar views of the other celebrities he was interested in, and based much of his assessment on their social media presence, without pausing to consider the ways in which these images might have been cultivated, or why this might be the case.

'Justin Bieber is probably a nice person.'

Irfan, aged 16

There were also some cases in which peer influence was possibly influencing the way in which a child presented themself more generally. For example, Irfan (16) presented himself as slightly less articulate than in previous waves. In the previous wave of research, he explained that he had an interest in the Israel-Palestine conflict, due to the fact that he has Palestinian heritage. But this year he said he didn't really care for politics, and this was not something he was interested in discussing, preferring instead to talk about celebrities.

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Key finding: Peer pressure and YouTube endorsements had a greater affect than traditional advertising on children's interest in products

- Relatively few of the children were able to remember examples of being influenced by TV advertising
- Most of the children felt that their peers had far more influence on their product choices
- YouTubers had a big impact on some children's tastes, and most viewers were interested to know what products their favourite YouTuber liked
- Few of the children bought products because their favourite YouTuber recommended it, but many had collected similar products

We observed a few instances of children were being influenced by TV advertising, especially among the younger children. For example, Lily (10) recounted a recent incident in which an advert on TV had inspired her to ask for a book. She had seen an advert for The World's Worst Children by David Walliams on the Disney Channel, and had decided she wanted it. She had asked her mum to buy it for her and had been given it as a result.

> *'I told my mum I wanted it like 50 million times and then she got it for me.'*
>
> *Lily, aged 10*

However, we observed that product interest was more likely to be generated by peer pressure and YouTuber endorsements, especially among girls who watched beauty videos. We didn't see any cases where a child had purchased something directly as a result of being advised to by a beauty vlogger, although we did see some correlations between an interest in beauty vlogging and an interest in beauty products, among the girls in our sample.

For example, Sarah (12) had several Rimmel products that had been recommended by her favourite vlogger, Zoella. She did not say that this was why she bought them, explaining instead that these were reliable and fairly cheap products to own. However, she was aware that they were recommendations that Zoella had also made. Similarly, Alice (11) regularly watched videos of Zoella shopping for fashion items. She said her mum had told her she was not allowed to buy any of Zoella's merchandise, as it was 'rubbish and overpriced', but she was keenly aware of Zoella's style, and owned several make-up items that she knew Zoella used. Peer pressure was a big thing for Alice, and she referenced 'trends' at school several times. She was also aware of the influence she could have on her friends. As she had decided she wanted to become a personal shopper when she grew up, a lot of her friends had now started coming to her for advice, which she greatly enjoyed.

For the most part, celebrity endorsements inspired general interest and an occasional purchase. For some of the boys in our sample, celebrities and sports stars were strong influencers on style. For example, Ahmed (10) was proud of his new football boots, which he had asked for because they were the model worn by his favourite Arsenal player, Mesut Ozil. Similarly, Irfan (16) had bought trainers costing around £150 from Kanye West's fashion line.

These purchases were often tied in to broader projects of self-making, whereby boys started to pay more attention to their clothes and style in general. A few noted hairstyles as increasingly important, and again, sports personalities were influential. Jack said he would like to have hair like Ronaldo, or his favourite vlogger Dan TDM, an extremely popular gaming YouTuber who posted mainly about the game Minecraft.

> *'I would like a cool haircut like Ronaldo.'*
>
> *Jack, aged 11*

9. New social possibilities online

9.1 GROUP CHATS

Key finding: Group chat increasingly dominates interaction on social media

- Unlike in previous waves, most respondents were now using group chat to stay in touch with friends
- Most were members of many different groups, spanning several platforms
- Group chats offered a semi-private space in which children could discuss a variety of topics
- Online groups were often larger than the child's offline social group, which could blur the boundaries between public and private
- Some respondents had experienced incidents getting out of hand on group chats
- Some had devised strategies to prevent uncomfortable social interactions in group chats

This year the majority of our sample were using group chat to stay in touch with their friends and family. Group chat provides a 'semi-private' space online, where young people can socialise with relatively large groups, without having to broadcast messages to their entire list of online contacts (often including family members). This is normally a space relatively free from adult scrutiny, fulfilling a range of functions, such as chatting, gossiping, swapping homework or arranging to meet. Most of our respondents were members of multiple group chats, spanning several platforms, each with a slightly different function and membership.

For example, as previously mentioned, Llysha (13) had set up a group chat on WhatsApp for her whole class, so that they could swap notes and ideas about homework. When some of her friends complained that this was too boring, she had set up another, more intimate group, which her and a few friends would use to arrange days out together. Llysha was not the only person in our sample to be using group chats for schoolwork – Alice (11) also had a WhatsApp group set up for her whole class, in which they would discuss homework, among other things, and Eve (16) was part of a group on Facebook where classmates swapped Geography revision notes.

Eve (16) was in fact part of several groups on Facebook Messenger. She had a main group, consisting of 15 of her friends, and this was their main way of staying in touch. This group had two main threads of conversation: general gossip about boys and parties, and planning a trip to Newquay, on which only some of the girls were going. She also had several group chats with more specific themes. She was part of the debating society at school, and was part of a group in which they would discuss work or forthcoming events. She was also part of another one entitled 'We are all fucked' in which her and her friends would share opinions and articles about the Brexit campaign.

Often group chats were larger than the child's offline social group, which could present new social problems by blurring the boundaries between public and private. Some children recounted problematic instances in which a joke had been taken too far, or when people had not read social signals correctly.

For example, Alice (11), described how on her class WhatsApp one boy had been teasing another and calling him fat. She said the instigator was challenged by other members of the

group, and claimed 'it was just a bit of banter', but says in this case he definitely "took it too far".

Grant (13), explained how there was a fine line between the 'right' kind of banter, and the 'wrong' kind. He said that whereas in most group conversations, teasing was acceptable, he had seen some cases where it had been taken too far. He said this did not pose too much of a problem between friends, as they were usually able to resolve things with a face-to-face discussion. He also explained that he did not see much of a difference between these online chats and the kind of banter he might face in the playground.

'It's just how you choose your friends. Words can hurt but you have to act responsibly.'

Grant, aged 13

At the older end of the spectrum, friendship groups had sometimes devised strategies to avoid cases of banter going too far. For example, Robert (15) was in a group chat on Facebook Messenger with three of his male friends. They generally used the group chat to discuss football, joke around or arrange meet-ups. He explained that all of the boys were careful not to tease each other too much when it came to football. Three of the boys, including Robert, supported Celtic, and the fourth supported Rangers. Robert said that all the boys were aware that the rivalry between the two teams spanned more than merely football, and had a political history. Therefore, they were all careful not to overstep the mark when it came to teasing the Rangers fan. In general, it was implied that he could take jokes further with them if his team ever won a match, as Rangers had been struggling in recent years.

Similarly, Eve (16) explained how she had some 'veto topics' with her friends. She said that as close friends, it was generally understood that they could get away with teasing each other on personal topics, and for the most part everyone enjoyed it, and took it as a sign of how close they were.

'Anything goes in my friendship group. Sometimes it can get pretty savage.'

Eve, aged 16

However, there had been cases where things had been taken too far, and Eve said it was usually easy to spot when this was the case. Usually, the person on the receiving end of the teasing would go quiet, or ask to be left alone. Each of the girls had one or two 'veto subjects' that the others knew they were not allowed to tease them about. For Eve, this was her disabled dog, and she said that everyone knew to respect this rule.

9.2 PUBLIC & PRIVATE

Key finding: Some young people ignore warnings about online privacy because they are tempted by the social advantages of keeping their profiles public

■ Most children had heard warnings about online privacy, but did not fully understand the reasons behind these rules
■ Most were aware, in part through watching YouTubers, that online publicity could generate social or economic status
■ Some were critical of the desire for online publicity, and naturally preferred to be private

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In wave 2 of our research we explored the role of social media among the children in our sample. We noted some differences between boys and girls, with girls seemingly facing more pressure to curate an online image,

and boys spending more time developing 'character' online. In the current wave the two genders seemed to be less disparate, with boys increasingly curating an online image through posting selfies.

We saw in wave 2 how children were likely to overestimate the privacy afforded by social media platforms, and post things without thinking about the consequences. In this wave, as in previous waves, we heard children quoting back safety messages about online privacy without fully grasping why they were important, and some were tempted to keep their profiles open for the social capital it could give them. However, some children in our sample were more cautious online, and made conscious efforts to keep their settings private, partly because of the messages they were hearing at school or from parents.

Many children knew that they should keep their online settings private. As we have seen in previous waves of this research, most had heard these messages from school or parents, but were not necessarily able to articulate the reasons for them. For example, Peter (11) had taken a lot of messages home from e-safety week, such as "don't post pictures in your school uniform" or "keep your user name anonymous". He knew this was to make sure that no one could trace him, but was not exactly able to explain why this was important. The assumed understanding between Peter and his sister seemed to be that people they encountered online 'might be bad.' Peter's understanding was fairly limited, particularly in view of the fact that he had experienced an incident earlier in the year: he had been playing Clash of Clans when another user started to ask him personal questions. Peter did not reply and flagged it to his parents, who 'took care of it' by blocking the user. Peter's parents said this had bolstered their confidence that he was able to recognise risks online, and that they could trust him to be open with them about these things. Peter did not remember this as a particularly scary event, just one that required the intervention of his mum and dad. Nonetheless, he was careful to keep his Instagram profile set to private.

Most young people had been told they should keep their social media accounts private. However, many had also been exposed to the conflicting idea that publicity was a good thing. As we saw in previous research waves, some explained that 'likes', 'followers' and 'subscribers' could be markers of popularity or social status. Even some of the youngest respondents, like Alice (11), were aware that for vloggers, the social currency of subscribers could soon become markers of social or economic success. Alice explained how she had been caught out by the desire for social status recently. She realised she had been accepting 'followers' on Instagram in order to increase the total number, as this was considered a mark of popularity among her peers. However, when an e-safety assembly at school reiterated the dangers of talking to unknown people online, she realised that her behaviour had been potentially risky.

'I realised I started accepting people I didn't know.'

Alice, aged 11

Following this assembly, she had combed through her account and deleted anyone that she didn't know personally. She ended up blocking 101 people, and she believed that the incident had made her more wary than many of her peers about her privacy settings. She explained that a lot of her friends went 'off-private' in order to get more 'likes' for their posts on Instagram, as this would make them seem more popular. However, she was careful not to pursue the same strategy again.

'I don't want a lot of people following me that I don't know.'

Alice, aged 11

Several other children were aware of the ways in which online profiles could generate social capital, and were generally able to express this better as they got older. At the younger end of the spectrum, Ahmed (10) explained he would delete pictures he had posted on Instagram if they didn't get enough 'likes', as this would make them look 'dull'. Grant (13) explained how the amount of 'likes' a picture got often equated to popularity at school.

REVEALING REALITY

'The more likes you get, the more known you are. It's like popularity.'

Grant, aged 13

At the older end of the spectrum, Eve (16) was more articulate about this, and had developed more of a critical stance. She and her friends talked about 'prime-time' on Instagram. This referred to the best time to post something in order to 'get the maximum number of likes'. They had decided that this was between 8.00 and 10.00pm, when most of their friends were online and likely to be browsing social media. This is a development since previous waves of research, when we did not observe such sophisticated strategies to generate likes. Eve explained that there was a transactional nature to posting 'likes' on Instagram, and if a friend liked one of her posts, she would be implicitly obliged to do the same. This was in part to boost the perceived popularity of her friends, but also to show solidarity with them in an online setting. Eve said she didn't really play this social game, but did occasionally post things and could receive between 20 and 70 likes for a popular post. But she also said that she was much less invested in social media than her peers, and had developed a bit of a reputation for being aloof as a result.

'The pressure to respond does exist but I've managed to avoid it and people just accept that's who I am.'

Eve, aged 16

Some younger respondents were also critical of the desire for publicity they saw in some of their peers on social media. For example, Llysha (13) was private and introverted. She argued that she did not feel the need to post information about herself online, and felt that others who did were generally showing off. She was also concerned about the longevity of her digital footprint, and aware that this was something people might check up on in the future if she was looking for work.

'Things on the internet never go away. People I don't know don't need to see it.'

Llysha, aged 13

9.3 BANTER & BULLYING

Key finding: Some children are finding subtle ways of being mean online

- Children were increasingly aware that their online behaviour can leave a trace, and some described instances of their peers finding inventive new ways of being mean online while avoiding leaving evidence
- Some children exploited group chat functionalities to deliberately create awkward social encounters
- These negative incidents were normally instigated from outside the child's friendship group

Children were increasingly aware that online behaviour leaves traces, and some described instances when they had seen that their peers were finding inventive new ways of being mean online without leaving any evidence of what they had done. This was partly a strategy to avoid getting caught, but might also intentionally have been playing on social ambiguities so they did not get labelled as mean by their peers. Group chat was often central to these new forms of teasing and bullying. As discussed in the section above, the social rules in these groups were often looser and less clearly defined, as the groups were often dynamic and tended to extend beyond a child's immediate circle of friends.

Some young people found ways of being mean by manipulating social rules, or using subtle forms of sarcasm or social actions out of context. In some cases, an external observer would not have been able to understand the texture of these encounters, but to an insider the meaning was clear. Often the transient nature of these actions made them untraceable or hard to pin down to the instigator.

For example, Irfan explained how he was part of an ongoing rivalry at school, much of which was played out online through the use of subtle teasing. Irfan was in year 11 at school, and many of his friends were girls in the year below. This had led to a rivalry between year 10 and year 11 boys, and year 10 and year 11 girls. He explained how the pictures he posted on Instagram often received negative comments from the boys in the year below. However, he said that these rarely had an explicitly mean message. The children were more likely to use subtle methods such as tagging a friend in one of Irfan's images, and posting a laughing emoticon as if laughing at an in-joke at Irfan's expense.

Similarly, some children used the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in group chats to create uncomfortable social encounters. Irfan recounted the time the boys in the year below set up their own group, into which he had suddenly been dropped, after which everyone posted laughing faces until he left the group.

Minnie (14) had witnessed a similar encounter, where a girl at school had posted a video on YouTube of a song she had written. People at school had uncovered the song and left a string of sarcastic comments underneath, heaping the video with insincere praise until the girl removed it. Minnie said it was obvious to any insider that the comments weren't sincere, but as no one had said anything overtly mean, ill intent couldn't be proved. She was wary about engaging with the online world as a result.

'I would never post a video in case that happened.'

Minnie, aged 14

These subtle forms of teasing or exclusion were more likely to come from outside a friendship group, in contrast to instances of banter getting out of hand (discussed in the previous chapter) which were more likely to be occurring within friendship groups, and resolved within the group.

Key finding: Young people do not use the term 'bullying', even in extreme cases

- Children did not use the word 'bullying' to refer to the unkind behaviour they had seen
- Instead, they tended to use words like 'banter' or 'harassment', depending on the severity of the incident
- Some children were reluctant to admit they were being bullied, as they did not want to appear weak

Bullying was not a word we heard children in our sample use, even in the most severe cases. Instead, children tended to use words like 'banter' to explain mild teasing among friends, and 'harassment' to refer to more severe cases. Children tended to resolve cases of 'banter gone too far' between themselves, and were unlikely to involve an adult unless the case was severe enough to be labelled 'harassment'.

At the extreme end, Brigit (17) had, in this wave of research, been involved in an ongoing string of online harassment, which had become so severe the police had become involved. She did not refer to it as bullying, rather used more adult language to explain the events, which is unsurprising given that this is how the events were framed by the police.

The harassment was originally aimed at Brigit's close friend, Carl, whose entire family was receiving death threats and other forms of harassment. This had subsequently been extended to include Brigit, and she received messages on Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat and Instagram, containing violent and threatening messages, as well as pictures of coffins and carved-up meat. The ordeal had left Brigit shaken, and for a month she had been too upset to go out.

'I just went to school, came back from school, and stayed in bed crying.'

Brigit, aged 17

REVEALING REALITY

The police were not able to identify the perpetrator, who had been using fake profiles and proxy servers, and advised Brigit to shut down her Facebook profile. She took this very seriously, and had not been on Facebook since. However, she had kept her Instagram profile open, and did not seem to regret this decision, despite having some fairly personal information there, such as images of herself on a 'weight loss journey' that she had been pursuing in previous months.

Brigit's case was somewhat extreme, and as she was nearly an adult it was unlikely anyone would refer to this incident as bullying. However, even at the younger, or milder, ends of the spectrum, we did not hear children referring to online teasing as 'bullying'. Instead, they were far more likely to refer to 'banter' or merely to 'being mean'.

For example, Grant (13) explained that his friends would never admit that they had been bullied online. He said that when an issue couldn't be resolved between friends it would probably be taken up with an adult. However, he said that the boys at his school would be careful to keep the matter fairly private, speaking only to a parent or perhaps the head of year. He argued that boys his age were worried it would make them seem 'weak' if they were known to have been bullied. For the most part, even in fairly extreme cases, he said that boys tended to use words like 'banter' to explain online teasing.

'It's sometimes serious and sometimes a case of banter taken too far.'

Grant, aged 13

10. Creativity is present, but is more common offline

10.1 DIGITAL CREATIVITY

Key finding: Most young people use online media to complement offline creativity

- Most young people used the internet to inspire creative hobbies offline
- Some children browsed online media for general inspiration, while others were more directed
- Social pressure sometimes influenced offline creative hobbies

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS INSIGHTS

In previous waves of research, we observed how YouTube was a source of inspiration for children seeking to develop their creative hobbies. Children often followed trends, such as making loom bands or playing Minecraft, using YouTube to develop their skills in these hobbies. We continued to observe this trend in seeking tuition for creative hobbies in this wave of research, although loom bands and Minecraft seem to have fallen out of fashion.

Most of the children in this year's cohort were searching online in order to complement their offline hobbies.

Most young people used the internet as a source of inspiration, information or instruction for their offline creative hobbies. For example, Grant had started learning piano since his dad, a music teacher, had taught him some chords. He found YouTube a useful visual resource form which to learn, and would regularly look up songs online and copy them through mimesis. He said he found this easier than downloading and reading the sheet music. This had allowed Grant to increase his repertoire and he had started to play occasionally at church recitals. Grant was also trying to teach himself magic using YouTube, although with less success. He had been watching a lot of videos of street magicians, including some videos showing how the trick was done. He found the sleight of hand too hard to master, but found that the visual aspect of YouTube made him more likely to try. He also liked looking up recipes on BBC Food, and said he preferred reading these as he went along rather than watching a video on YouTube.

'If I watched a YouTube video I would have to keep on rewinding it to find the right part.'

Grant, aged 13

Some respondents just liked browsing the internet for general inspiration. For example, several of the respondents in our sample were watching what they called 'DIY videos', showing craft tutorials, on YouTube, although few had actually got around to making the items in real life. Both Llysha and Josie enjoyed watching craft tutorials for decorative items as they enjoyed seeing what they could make in terms of home decoration, fashion or cookery. Although both considered themselves creative people, neither had managed to marshal the necessary materials to make the things in the videos. However, both said they thought the internet was a great resource for creativity.

'Without the internet I couldn't access ideas for things I could do.'

Josie, especially, said she liked seeing instructions in visual form as she had dyslexia, and would find it much harder to read them.

> *'It's interesting for me to see how to make things because I find it hard to read.'*

> *Josie, aged 11*

While these children enjoyed browsing YouTube videos for entertainment or general inspiration, some also turned to YouTube when they were looking directly for more specific instructions. Minnie (14), although not an avid YouTube watcher, knew she could consult the platform to learn how to make decorations for her room. In this wave she had moved into a new bedroom, and had spent the last few months decorating it to her style. One of her projects was her terrarium – a glass box full of cacti. She had not known how to make one initially, but had known that she could look on YouTube for instructions.

Offline creativity seemed to be driven by both personal interest and social influence. While Minnie's terrarium was an example of a personal project, we saw how certain hobbies could be adopted and discarded as a result of social pressure. Notably, in this year's wave of research, loom bands were no longer a popular hobby, as they had been in previous waves. There was little evidence in this year's wave that anyone was engaging with them. When probed, Alice (11) admitted that she had kept a box of bands which she had brought with her from her old house. She was not making them at all now, and while she thought she might make one again if she were bored, she had not done so, as none of her friends were making them.

> *'Trends just come and go at school.'*

> *Alice, aged 11*

Key finding: Parents are more likely to encourage or facilitate offline creativity

- Respondents had differing ideas about what it meant to be creative online
- Creative games and apps were popular, but most children only used basic functions
- Most children were familiar with the programme 'Scratch' from coding lessons at school
- Very few were exploring digital creativity, such as coding, outside the classroom
- Some respondents expressed a desire to post videos online, but very few had done this successfully

We found that for the most part, parents were more likely to encourage their child to pursue creativity offline. When talking about digital creativity, each of our respondents had different interpretations of what it meant to be creative online. For most, being creative online was about approaching things in a new way. Few were exploring or manipulating digital media in order to create something new. Robert (15) explained how he thought of being creative as finding novel ways around a problem. He argued that people could play FIFA creatively if they had a fresh approach to the game. For Robert, this could even be cheating, if they were exploring new loopholes.

> *'Being creative is trying to do things in a new way, to the best you can. You can apply creativity to FIFA. People play in creative ways.'*

> *Robert, aged 15*

Similarly, Grant (13) felt that being creative was doing something in your own way:

> *'There's the normal way of doing stuff, and the different way. I like the different way.'*

> *Grant, aged 13*

In last year's wave, we observed that digital creativity was being facilitated by the online game Minecraft. In this year's wave this had somewhat fallen out of fashion, and only a couple of respondents were still using it. Instead, most respondents in our sample were exploring creative apps or online games, but most were using these within guided parameters, and so were limited in the scope of what they could achieve.

For example, both Alice and Carmen were using the app Music.ly, a music video-making app, which had become popular at school. The app allows users to film and edit short videos, add filters to them, and put them in time to contemporary pop songs. This process is fairly formulaic, which Alice and Carmen liked because it seemed easy. However, neither were pushing the creative boundaries of this app beyond making simple sing-along videos featuring themselves and their friends, and neither seemed to find the format of the app constrictive in any way.

The majority of the children in our sample were learning basic coding at school through programmes such as Scratch, which teaches children how to animate an avatar through the application of simple lines of instruction in sequence. However, few seemed confident that they had a true understanding of how to code, and many explained that they found it difficult. For example, Grant was learning basic coding at school, using Scratch, but said that he was 'not good'. He had missed a lesson at school and since then had felt unable to catch up with the rest of the class.

'Coding is hard work'

Grant, age 13

Not many were pushing the boundaries of what they could achieve with coding, and few were interested in exploring these programs outside the classroom. Nadia (12), for example, was familiar with Scratch through her coding lessons at school, but she was not interested in playing these games at home.

Josie (11) was exploring coding a little, outside the classroom, as she had access to a learning resource (Dash) through her mum's job supplying smart whiteboards for schools. Dash is a robot which responds to simple coding instructions through an app on the iPad. Josie said this was much simpler for her to understand; as she had dyslexia she found it easier to relate instructions to a physical object and see how it would work. Another exception was Jack (11), who had engaged with the programme Scratch outside the classroom, and had experimented with how to build simple games.

Some respondents demonstrated a desire to make videos and post these online, although few had followed this through successfully. Often, this was partly because they found the technology difficult to use. William (12), for example, said in the previous wave of research that he was planning to set up his own YouTube channel and produce his own videos. This year he had received a GoPro, laptop and editing software from his parents for Christmas. However, he had not got round to making any videos, and had written off the plan. He had struggled to learn how to use the software, and said that the internet was 'laggy' because he lived in the countryside.

'I'm not very good at editing.'

William, aged 12

Similarly, Nadia had revealed ambitions to 'become a film star and make lots of films'. Her mum had bought her a cheap video camera so she could start making some. However, she had not been able to work out how to insert the memory card or change the battery, and the camera remained in its box, unused. In part, this lack of engagement with digital media may have been due to a lack of parental encouragement or support in learning to use the technology. Parents did not necessarily understand or prioritise digital media for their child. Nadia's mum was highly

encouraging of her offline hobbies, such as drama and dance, but had not sought to help her further with the camera, perhaps because this was something she herself found daunting.

Key finding: Peer groups are both a driver for, and a barrier to, digital creativity

- Many children enjoyed engaging with creative apps because of their social functions
- Trends at school influenced online creativity
- Social influences could also be constrictive, and some children removed attempts they had posted online, so they would not be found by peers

Social influences, especially through social media, were sometimes a huge driver of children's attempts at digital creativity, and many children in our sample were drawn to creative image or video making apps because of the social features they offered. A key feature of the app Music.ly, for example, is the fact that once made, the videos can be shared with other users. This means that videos can be shared among the user's social network, and this was part of the appeal for some users of the app in our study. Alice (11), for example, really enjoyed making videos with friends. The app allowed her and her friends to make videos together remotely, with each person recording a segment and then editing the footage together. Alice enjoyed being able to make videos with friends, and it seemed that her engagement with the app was driven more by her desire to socialise than by her desire to make videos.

On the other hand, social influences could also limit attempts at digital creativity. For example, some respondents in our study had attempted to make videos as a result of their engagement with vlogging. The social success of YouTubers was seen as appealing, and many of the children had been inspired to try their own vlogs after watching some made by famous YouTubers. Generally, however, young people had one or two attempts, which they removed later after they began to feel self-conscious or worried that these might be found by their peers.

Peter (11) had tried to upload a video of himself playing Minecraft. He said he had filmed himself using his iPad and had later decided to remove the video after it received some negative comments on YouTube, saying he sounded 'weird'. Peter said that he did not know who had made these comments, and that they hadn't really affected him. However, he had taken the video down and had not attempted to make any more.

'I didn't really get hurt by the comments.'

Peter, aged 11.

Alice (13) had also tried to upload a video after watching her favourite YouTubers make theirs. She had made a video documenting her 'morning routine', and had uploaded it onto YouTube, but had soon removed it as she decided it was boring, and she didn't want any of her school friends to find it. She said she regretted making these videos and was a bit embarrassed to be reminded of them. This is similar to the behaviour we observed in previous waves, when Alice had uploaded some dance videos, feeling the need to have some sort of online portfolio of her skills. She later removed them as she felt they looked stupid, and was embarrassed by them.

'When you're young you think things are cool and when you are older you are like: 'Why did I do that?''

Alice, aged 13

11.   Next steps

Children's Media Lives will be funded for another year; year 4 of the research will be conducted in summer 2017.

As far as possible, the next year will consist of interviews with the same 18 children who featured in this report. It will explore what has changed in the lives of these children, and whether and how this has changed their media use and attitudes. We will explore the impact of any changes in their family circumstances, their friendships, interests and hobbies. The research will also identify whether the children are using their existing devices, services and content more or less than in the previous three years, whether any new devices or services have been acquired by the child or their family, and how these changes have influenced patterns of use.

The research will continue to monitor children's knowledge and understanding of content creation and funding, advertising, and the risks of being online. While there will inevitably be a small research effect associated with asking the children questions about these issues, we hope to identify whether and how their knowledge expands with age and experience. Year 4 will also explore in more depth some of the areas touched on in years 1, 2 and 3, building on new areas of interest as they emerge. A report setting out the findings from year 4 of Children's Media Lives will be published on the Ofcom website in due course.

REVEALING REALITY

12. Glossary

Vlogger: Someone posting video blogs, usually on YouTube

YouTuber: Someone who making a living by posting videos online. The term carries something of a professional or celebrity status. Only famous vloggers, with many subscribers and a clear source of income from vlogging, were understood by our sample to be YouTubers.

Google snippet: A function of the search engine Google which offers a short 'snippet' answer, often one sentence or image, in one of the top results for a search.

Wikipedia: An online encyclopaedia that anyone can add to or edit, and which is reviewed by the online Wiki community, aiming to provide an element of quality control and accuracy of information.

Simple Wikipedia: A version of the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, which gives answers in simple English

Siri: An inbuilt Apple search function which uses voice recognition, rather than typing, to find information.

Broadcast TV: Programmes made specifically to be broadcast on TV, both live and on demand.

Live TV: Programmes broadcast on TV at the same time for all viewers.

Catch-up TV: A television service in which programmes are available for a period of time, to be accessed when the viewer chooses.

Thank you