Children's Media Lives

Ofcom
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for everyone

Wave 6: data collection guide

Research Objectives

- To understand and track the media lives of our respondents over time, identifying new and emerging trends and potentially risky behaviours online
- The overarching aim of this research is to provide Ofcom with ethnographic insight into how children of different ages and living in a range of different situations are using digital media.

More specifically, the research will:

- Explore children's understandings and perceptions of media use
- Understand situational and interpersonal influences on media consumption
- Develop a framework for understanding the influences and pressures which affect children's attitudes and behaviour towards digital media
- Provide a rich source of visually engaging data which can be used by Ofcom and stakeholders to communicate key issues

For **Wave 6** the research will look to update and extend our understanding of children and their media lives. This will involve tracking changes in their critical thinking in line with their age. Alongside this, the research will broaden the topics covered as part of the research.

Purpose of this document

This discussion guide illustrates the structure and flow of the interview. The document is designed to be dynamic and flexible: interviewers will use it as a guide for discussion and will pursue interesting or relevant insights or topics as they emerge, rather than sticking rigidly to this discussion guide. The main themes and questions contained in this discussion guide will be covered in every interview at some point.

We anticipate that the interviews will last approximately **2-3 hours**.

Outline of the Guide

This guide is organised into the following sections:

DATA SOURCE	TOPIC / AREA OF INTEREST
Parent interviews	- Parents involvement in media (tracking) - Changes in the family / home - Understanding of risk

Child interviews	■ Content preferences & watching behaviour ■ Positive use of the internet ■ Social media and group chats ■ Critical understanding and online safety
Tasks & observation	■ App tracking tasks & screen record
Short post-task	■ Critical Thinking (tracking)

Using the guide

Due to the quantities of information the research is looking to collate across a range of subjects associated with media usage, the team will be flexible to adapt to conversations about media use as led by the children themselves. The research may therefore not cover all subjects in as much detail with all the children involved in the work.

The guide is split into the following main sections:

- Part I: Introduction
- Part 2: Preferences and behaviours
- Part 3: Online safety and understanding data
- Part 4: Parent questions
- Part 5: Critical understanding: short post-tracking exercise

Questions relating to trust and critical thinking exist throughout the guide.

Each section has an estimated indication of the time allocation for the discussion with children / young people and parents.

Interview flow:

Each section starts with a 'lead question'. These are broad, open questions that allow the respondent to answer with elements of their life that they believe to be interesting. The questions will give researchers cues for which elements to probe further.

Each open question is followed by a set of 'probing questions', which will enable the researcher to delve deeper into individual behaviours, preferences and attitudes.

Occasionally, 'Deep dive' questions are presented, giving the researcher the option to explore questions in depth, where appropriate.

Interviews will last approximately 2.5 - 3 hours, depending on the child's ability to concentrate. Short break activities may be necessary to keep child engaged and prevent interview fatigue.

Interview Set Up

- Independent research agency
- Photography and film
- Consent
- Researcher to transfer screen record files onto laptop at the beginning of the interview and check that they are there/working
- Content they talk about will be anonymised

Researcher topic reminder for _____

Researchers should try and remember to check in on specific topics and issues that have come up during past interviews.

Use this box to note some things down to have top of mind before the interview and to refer back to at the end to make sure you haven't missed anything!

Examples of this might include:

- Was there a particular topic or event that was very important to the child last year? Is it still important, if not why not?
- Was there a particular programme/game/influencer they were really into last year? Are they still into it?
- Was there an activity/hobby they were into last year? Are they still into this?

Part 1: Introduction

About you and what's new

Objectives:
- To ease respondent in and establish rapport
- To get a sense of any big changes that have happened in the last year [change of school, new friends, events like Christmas or Birthdays]
- To assess whether any new technology, trends or devices have changed their media behaviours
- To assess if, how and why smart speakers are used

LEAD QUESTION: What's new or different since we last saw you?

- What's the best thing that happened to you over the last year?
- How's school going? (any changes)?
- Any big plans for the summer holidays?

LEAD QUESTION: What are your favourite things to do in your free time?

PROBE: sports, other hobbies, seeing friends, studying

- What are you doing when you're not using technology?
- What does being offline mean to you?

LEAD QUESTION: Have you got any new technology since last year?

PROBE: speaker technology like dot, google home

NB if respondent has new device, researcher to ask to see it:

- When did you get it?
  PROBE: special occasion, like birthday or Christmas
- Who got it for you?
  PROBE: family member, saved up their own money, as a treat or reward for something
- Can you show me how it works?
- How easy was it to use when you first got it?
If relevant: What's the biggest difference between this device and the last one you had?
- What do you most often do on this new device?
- Has having this device meant you use any other devices less?
- Have your parents had any input on how you use it?

If they have a speaker technology device (google home, amazon echo, dot)
- Who does it belong to?
  PROBE: is it theirs or is for the whole family?
- What is it used for?
- What sort of questions do you ask it?
- Where is it kept in the house?
- What's good about it?
- What do you dislike about it?

Part 2: Preferences and behaviours

Content preferences and watching behaviour

Objectives:
- To understand media preferences, including devices, programmes, and habits (e.g. with who, what, when)
- To assess how popular YouTube is compared to last year
- To gauge preferences around content
- To understand behaviours relating to news-related content
- To understand if and how children access different tech / content at their friends' houses

LEAD QUESTION: What are your favourite media activities?

PROBE: TV, social media, video games (Xbox, PlayStation), radio, watching video clips

- How often do you do these activities?
  If radio mentioned:
    - How often do you listen to radio?
    - Where do you usually listen to it? (in the car, on Spotify, on TV).
    - How do you choose what station to listen to?

- How do you feel about how much time you spend watching TV/ YouTube/ playing games/using your mobile phone?
    - Do you wish you could spend more or less time?
    - Do you ever do more than one media activity at the same time?

PROBE: for example like watching TV and using social media

LEAD QUESTION: What do you usually like to watch things on at the moment?

PROBE: different sources like Netflix, Now TV, BBC, YouTube, Prime Video

- What's good about this platform/channel?
- What device do you usually watch it on?

NB: researcher to pay attention to whether it's their device or someone else's.

For subscription platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Now TV:

- Do you have your own account?
  If no:
    - Whose account do you use?
    - How often do you use it?

LEAD QUESTION: What shows, programmes and films do you like watching?

PROBE: include shows on platforms like YouTube, vlogs, IGTV, other online platforms.

- What kinds of things do you watch with your family?
- What kinds of things do you do with your friends?
    - Is there anything you watch at your friend's house that you don't watch at your own home?
- Are there any other media activities you do with your friends that you don't do on your own/at your own house?

  PROBE: video games, websites, social media platforms.

■ Do you tend to watch these shows live or not?

PROBE: on demand/catch up/pre-recorded/DVDs?

LEAD QUESTION: What new things are you and your friends watching on YouTube?

■ What do you watch?
■ **PROBE:** Funny videos/ Music videos/ Vloggers or YouTubers/ 'How-to' videos/ Game tutorials/ 'Unboxing' videos /ASMR sensory videos, e.g. slime
■ How do you find new things on YouTube?
■ **PROBE:** recommendations/own account/ friends/ searching
■ Do you normally watch this content alone or with other people?

■ Which channel or platform could you not live without?
  o Or does it depend on what/when you are watching?
  o What do you think are some of the main differences between TV and YouTube?
  o Which do you prefer? Why?
PROBE: shorter clips, funnier, more relatable, my friends watch it

LEAD QUESTION: Thinking about the kind of things you like to watch, what kind of things do you think are important to see?

PROBE: People your age, people that look like you, people that live in the same part of the country as you, show people doing the same sorts of things that you and your friends do

■ Where do you tend to see these things the most?
  o NB researcher to note if this is in adult or children's content
  o NB researcher to note if this is PSB/Netflix/YouTube
■ Why do you think these things are important?
    PROBE: for you, for others?
■ Would you like to see more of these things?
              o Why/ why not?

LEAD QUESTION: How do you learn about what's happening in the world (i.e. news stories)?

NB. *Researcher to pay attention to news preferences, how they are (if at all) accessing news sources*

PROBE: from friends / family, radio, google search, social media, YouTube, on in the background

■ How often do you look something up yourself?

PROBE: sports results, election results, celebrity gossip

■ Thinking about a recent news story, where did you hear about it?
■ If you were looking up a news story, where would you go online?
■ What kinds of news do you pay attention to?

PROBE:
        o Sports/ sports personalities
        o Music news / singers/ musicians
        o Celebrities/ Famous people/ actors/ reality TV stars
        o Politics or current affairs
        o Local news or events - near where you live

- o Serious things going on in your country/ in the UK/ national news
- o Serious things going on in other countries/ world events/ international news
- o Animals or the environment
- o Fashion and beauty
- o Science and technology
- o Weather

LEAD QUESTION: If you stopped getting access to the internet, what would you miss the most?

- ■ Why do you say that?
- ■ How would you feel if you had to live without the internet?
- ■ How often do you spend time offline during the day?
- ■ Can you tell me about a time when you haven't been able to get on the internet/didn't have coverage?
  PROBE: maybe on a holiday, somewhere more remote
  If yes:
  - o How did you feel at the time?
  - o What did you do?
  - o Was there anything that changed?
- ■ Have you ever done anything to cut down your screen time/ time on the internet before?
  If yes,
  - o What did you do?
  PROBE: app controls, deleting apps or making own rules and using will power to withdraw.
- ■ What was it like/ what do you think it would be like?

LEAD QUESTION: What kinds of activities, hobbies or interests has the internet helped you to do?
PROBE: learn new skills, maintain friendships, help with homework.
- ■ Which of these do you think has had the biggest impact on your life?
  - o Why?
- ■ Which of these do you think are the most important to be able to do?
  - o For you?
  - o For others?

Social media

Objectives:
- ■ To revisit ways in which children navigate social media and group chats, discussing the potential benefits, drawbacks and risk of socialising online and noting any changes from last year.
- ■ To gauge whether there have been any developments in self-regulating behaviours by children.
- ■ To see whether there have been changes in how children portray themselves online.

LEAD QUESTION: what kind of social media platforms/sites are you using most at the moment?

- ■ Are you using any new features or apps/platforms (since last we saw you)?

  - o If so what?
PROBE: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, What's App/ Live streaming, TikTok, livestreaming

- What do you like/dislike about them?
- Do your friends use them too? What types of thing do you share with people online?

If livestreaming mentioned:
- What kind of things do you do when live streaming?
- How often do you do it?
- When? Is it by yourself or with others?

PROBE: photos, status / text, music, websites / links, YouTube videos, TikTok

- Would you mind showing me anything you've shared on social media recently?
- What kinds of messages do you send/get sent?
- How would you describe the differences between the different types of platforms?
- Which do you use/like the most? Why?
- Have you ever done anything to cut down the time you spend on social media apps?
  PROBE: deleting apps, using screen time controls

LEAD QUESTION: What other apps (outside main social media platforms) do you use on your mobile phone?

If younger child does not have phone - ask about any apps they use on parent/ carer/ sibling phone or apps used on a tablet for this section

- What do you use it for?
- How often do you use it?
- How often do you download new apps?
- Are they free or do you pay for them?
- How do they think the app companies make money out of free apps?

NB: Researcher to pay attention to any understanding of data collection.

LEAD QUESTION: What do you think about the way people portray themselves online?

- PROBE: fun, honest, truthful, cool, exaggerated
- Are there differences between the ways different people show themselves online?
  PROBE: friends, family, peers at school, celebrities
  - How about on different platforms? Why?
- Who do you think shows themselves as they really are?
  - Who, if anyone, do you think might exaggerate or change parts of their life online?

LEAD QUESTION: How do you portray yourself online?
- How truthful are you?
- Do you sometime change/ exaggerate certain details?
  - Why, why not?
  - What's different about your 'real life' from what's on your social media account?
- Are there some things you would never post about yourself online?
  - What types of things might this be?
  - Are there some things you would share with some people and not others?
  - If so, what types of things?

LEAD QUESTION: What do you think about the age restrictions on social media?

- Do you think there are any that are too high/low?
- What can you tell me about the age restrictions for different social media?

PROBE: Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat

Part 3: Online Safety & Understanding data

Harmful Content & Safety

Objectives:
- To understand what children think is suitable content for them.
- To understand more about what children see as harmful content.
- To explore tensions between safe and unsafe online behaviours.

LEAD QUESTION: What kinds of online activities do you think might be harmful?
>   **PROBE**: talking to strangers, giving out details, online scams

- What can you tell me about the risks on social media?

   PROBE: Things you do / don't say, pictures you do / don't put up, talking to strangers etc.
- How much do you worry about this compared to your parents?
   - What do your parents / teachers worry about more than you?
   - Why do you think that is?
   - What do you worry about more than your parents / teachers?
   - Why do you think that is?
- Have you or your friends ever seen anything online that is:
   - Nasty
   - Upsetting
   - Worrying
- If so, what can you tell me about it?
- What do you think is an example of something online that's hateful?
- How was it resolved?
- If you see something worrying/nasty/ upsetting online, does it affect you in your offline life?
   - Why/ why not?
   - In what ways?

LEAD QUESTION: What kinds of things do you do to avoid harm/ risk online?
- Do you have certain rules / strategies for avoiding content like this?
   - If so, what?
   - How do these work?
- What kinds of things have you heard from your family / school / friends about avoiding harm / risk online?
   - What do you think about these rules / guidance?
   - Do you think they work?
   - Why/ Why not?
- Do you ever look for information yourself about how to avoid harm online?
   - If so, where?
   - What information did you discover?
- Can you think of any social media/ online games that you don't use because you are worried about them?
   - If so, which? Why?
- Do you think you behave similarly to your friends or differently?

- o   What kinds of rules/ technique do they use?
- o   Why do you think they are similar/ different?

LEAD QUESTION: How do you think people should treat each other online in general?

- ■ What do you think behaving 'respectfully' online looks like?
    - o   Where have you learnt this?

    PROBE: Teachers, parents, siblings, friends, independently etc.

- ■ Is this different / the same as behaving 'respectfully' offline?
- ■ Do you think this applies more to certain groups/ online platforms than others?
    - o   If so, which?

LEAD QUESTION: Have you ever seen people being nasty, mean or unkind to others?

- ■ Have you seen people being unkind in person e.g. at school, after school clubs, when out and about?

    - o   What happened?
    - o   How did it make you feel?
- ■ What about online? E.g. on social media or group chats?

    PROBE: Unpleasant / cruel messages/ posts, links to websites / pages that are negative, criticise others, trolling?
    - o   Do you think people are more mean online or offline? Why?
    PROBE: what's the difference between being nasty/mean face-to-face vs. online?
    - o   What can you tell me about jokes/banter/memes?
    - o   Do jokes/banter ever get taken too far online?
    - o   Can you tell me about it? How did you/ your friends deal with it?

LEAD QUESTION: If something happens online or offline that makes you feel upset, what do you do?

- ■ What might happen online/ offline to make you feel upset?
    - o   Do you have any examples?
- ■ Are there certain things you do to make yourself feel better?
    - o   Why does this make you feel better?
    - o   Where did you hear about doing this?
- ■ Do you do different things depending on whether you were upset by something on/offline?

    PROBE: ONLINE sign out of social media, turn off the device, tell a parent/ teacher/ friends, change online status, stop using social media, etc

    PROBE: OFFLINE: hang out with a friend, distract yourself, spend time with family, do a hobby, etc

DEEP DIVE QUESTIONS for older respondents (13+) who have heard about content promoting self-harm

- ■ Have you witnessed anything online related to self-harming behaviours?
    - o   If so, what can you tell me about it?
    - o   What did it involve?
    - o   Who was involved?
    - o   How did it make you feel?
    - o   Did you do anything afterwards?

PROBE: report it, unfollow, delete account

- Where do you think people might see content relating to self-harm on the internet?

PROBE: hashtags, imagery, chat groups

- Is this something you/ people you know worry about?
    o What kinds of places does it happen?
    o PROBE: forums, social media, texts
- What do you think you would do if you saw behaviour like this online?
    o PROBE: do nothing, tell an adult, tell a friend, write back
- Have you heard anything in the news recently about self-harm content on social media?
    If yes:
    o What was it about?
    o What happened?
    o Did it change the way you think about online behaviours?

Advertising

Objectives:
- To gauge a more in depth understanding around children's recognition of adverts
- To also investigate awareness of influencers as subtle forms of advertisement/endorsement.

LEAD QUESTION: When do you usually see adverts online?

   PROBE: Different platforms e.g. Instagram /Facebook / Snapchat, online games, apps, email.
- Do you ever receive emails or messages from companies/ brands about things?
    o If so, what kinds of things? Can you show me?
    o Why do you think you might receive messages like that?
    o How do you think they might know your email address?
    o What do you think about receiving messages like this?
- Do you tend to see adverts that relate to things you like online?
    o What kinds of things?
    o What do you think when you see these adverts?
    o Why do you think you might be seeing adverts for these things?
    o Do you think other people see the same adverts as you?
- Have you ever followed an advert to buy a product or use a service / app?
    o Why did you do this?
    o How often do you do this?

LEAD QUESTION: How do you think YouTubers and influencers on Instagram make money?

   PROBE: Sponsorship, IGTV (brands / ads), Instagram shopping
- How does this influence how you feel about them?
- How obvious should it be if someone is trying to sell you something?
    o How important is it to you?

*If respondent mentions a **particular influencer(s)** above:*

o Can you show me a video where -*influencer name*-is recommending something/showing you something they really like/like to use?

After video has been shown- researcher to probe:

o Why do you think -influencer name- is recommending/telling us about this certain product/toy/experience?
o How do you feel about videos like this?
o What's the difference between a video like this and more traditional adverts?

LEAD QUESTION: How often do you buy things online?

- What kinds of things do you buy?
  o Where do you shop online?
  o How do you find out about online shopping/products?

PROBE: Advertising, suggested by friends, popular at school etc.

o How do you pay for it?

PROBE: are they using their parent's card- do their parents know when they buy things online?

o Have you ever bought anything online by accident?
- How often do you read reviews before buying something / a service?
  o How reliable are these reviews?
  o What makes you decide to trust these reviews?
- What are some of the risks / dangers of buying things online?
  o Have you experienced any of these yourself?
- How worried are you about buying things online?
  o What steps do you take to make sure you're buying things safely online?

PROBE: Check with parents, using familiar websites, reading carefully etc.

Trust and privacy

Objectives:
- To assess whether children verify information
- To understand how children select which information to use / trust

- To understand children's attitudes to sharing personal data to access content
- To gauge children's understanding of data collection and use
- To explore potential tensions between having public and private profile.

LEAD QUESTION: Do you ever think about whether what you see online is trustworthy/truthful?

If yes:

- What do you think about
- How do you know that?

PROBE: is it something their parents have said, something they learnt at school, something talked about with friends

- What kind of things online make you think about this?

LEAD QUESTION: To what extent do you trust what you see online?

- Which websites or apps do you trust the most?

- o   What is it about these that you trust?

    PROBE: Layout / design, reputation, frequent use, friends/ family use them etc.

- ■   Are there any websites or apps you don't trust?
    - o   What is about these that you don't trust?
- ■   How do you decide what to trust and what not to trust online?
    - o   Is this different to how you make decisions about what to trust offline?
        - ▪   If so, how is it different?
- ■   Do you ever check information elsewhere to make sure it's correct?

    PROBE: Googling, asking parents, discussing with friends / teachers etc.

LEAD QUESTION: How do you know whether a news programme/ article / video / post is trustworthy?

- ■   Which types of news content are most trustworthy? Why?

PROBE: videos, text, images, 'tweets', blogs, TV programmes

- ■   Can you show me some examples of trustworthy news stories and sites?
    - o   Who is the news provider on this website?
    - o   What are the signs this is a trustworthy story?
    - o   How did the news provider find out about this story?
- ■   Who do you know that provides the news? (Which news providers do you know?)

PROBE: BBC, Sky, The Guardian, The Times, the Telegraph, The Daily Mail, The Sun, The Independent, Russia Today, BuzzFeed, Vice, Lad-Bible YouTubers/ Vloggers etc.

- ■   What are some of the differences between these different providers?
- ■   How similar / different do you think the different news sources they produce are?
- ■   How trustworthy do you think the different providers are?
- ■   Do you think about how people making the news get paid? Does this make a difference to what the news is?

LEAD QUESTION: How private are you online?

- ■   Why do you say that?
- ■   Which personal details do you keep private?
- ■   What kinds of information are you willing to share?

    PROBE: Differences between two kinds of information

- ■   What steps do you take to keep your details and data private?

    PROBE: Giving out false information, avoiding entering info, strict privacy settings, etc.

LEAD QUESTION: What can you tell me about the privacy settings on your social media?

- ■   Can you show me your privacy settings?
- ■   Did you set these up?
    - o   Did you have help? If so, from whom?
- ■   Why did you choose these settings?
- ■   How do you think they compare to your friends/ other people at school?
- ■   What do you think about the information you share on social media?

    PROBE: Posting opinions, photos, tagging in locations

- ■   Who do you think might be interested in this information?

PROBE: Friend, family, Facebook, companies

- Do you know that Facebook and other organisations collect and use data about you?
- Why do you think they might be interested in this information?

PROBE: Not sure, advertising, want to know where I am, money, etc.

- What do you think about the idea that these people might be collecting information about you?

LEAD QUESTION: Have you ever given out details to get something in return online?

PROBE: Playing a free game, streaming online, a new app, completing a survey etc.

- If so, which of your details did you give?

PROBE: Name, DOB, email address

- o Did you worry about this/ ask an adult at all?
- o Do your friends share things like this online?
- o Is this information you were happy to give out or would you have preferred to keep it private?
- If not, would you have done if your friends were doing it?

PROBE: why, why not?

- How do you think your personal data might be collected online?

PROBE: accepting cookies, accepting terms and conditions, using free wifi, logging in through social media accounts, installing an app, 'liking' on social media.

- Do you know what cookies are?
  - o What do you think happens when you accept cookies?

LEAD QUESTION: What reasons might you have for not wanting to be private online?

- What do you think about the following?
       Getting more followers
  - o Impressing friends online
  - o Getting 'free services' (e.g. online streaming platforms)
  - o Seeing adverts that relate to me

LEAD QUESTION: Do you think there are ways of people knowing what you have done online in the past?

PROBE: e.g. the websites they've visited

- How might someone be able to find this out?

PROBE: Have you ever heard of 'browsing history'

- Have you heard 'cookies'?
- What do you think they are?
- How do you think they work?

Part 4: Questions for parents

What role do you think media plays in your family?

       PROBE: What media do you consume together as a family?

LEAD QUESTION: Since we last saw you, has anything changed in your approach to keeping your child / children safe online/ with other media?

- Have you set any new rules around their media use?
    - Why/ why not?

  PROBE: on whether children are allowed devices in their bedroom/or were previously but then rules changes
- How strict would you say you are about these rules?
    - How do you think your child / children feel about these rules?

- Have you relaxed any of your previous rules?
    - Why/ why not?
- Has anything happened in the last year that concerned you?
    - What can you tell us about it?
    - What was your reaction?
    - Did you speak to anyone else about it?
- Have you noticed any changes in your children because of social media or technology in the last year?

- To what degree do you talk to your child / children about the dangers of going online?

  PROBE: content and suitability, trust in what they see, sharing information, meeting strangers, cyberbullying, future and job prospects, downloads and viruses, inappropriate personal pictures

    - When do you think it becomes appropriate to have these conversations?

- To what extent do you worry about your child putting personal data online?
    - Do you know what kinds of data they are posting?
    - Do you talk to them about this?
    - How do you feel about posting pictures/ information about your child online?

- Would you say your child does or has ever tried to challenge your rules?
    - What did they do / have they done?
    - What did you think about this?
- Have you seen anything in the news recently about young people and media or technology?
- How do you find information about keeping your child/ren safe online?
    - **PROBE:** specific website, word of mouth, other parents, school, parent whatsapp groups

Part 5: Short post tracking task

Critical thinking (short post task)

*Researchers can complete the quiz with the children or ask them to do this alone.

Short digital quiz to understand what children know about the Internet. All open questions rather than multiple choice so that the process does not lead the children.

- ■ I'd like you to answer the following questions as best you can.

Which of these websites do you think is owned by another company?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
YouTube			
Netflix			
Snapchat			
TikTok			
Instagram			
Apple			
Google			
Sky			
BBC			
Facebook			
Xbox			

- o How do you think Instagram makes money?
- o How do you think Snapchat makes money?
- o How trustworthy is Wikipedia?