

# FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION:

## YOUNG PEOPLE SHAPING ONLINE SAFETY

INSIGHTS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
ACROSS WALES ON ONLINE SAFETY



YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES SHARE WHAT THEY THINK NEEDS TO  
BE CHANGED TO KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE ONLINE

Supporting young people to lead change in online safety

By Platform (Rebecca Nunn, Lauren Davies and Luke Rees) and the Digital Guardians

**PLAT**FORM

For young people | bobl ifanc

**NSPCC**  
CYMRU | WALES



# SUMMARY



I feel as though the negatives of the internet is all that people hear about nowadays, it would be nice for people to know about the good things it can do as well.

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I love being part of the online safety project because the group is showing how to stay safe online from a child's point of view and makes everyone feel seen and heard.

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**The Online Safety Project was a Wales-wide, youth-led engagement programme designed to amplify the voices and experiences of children and young people living in Wales. The project explored how young people experience being online, what helps them feel safe, and what puts them at risk, with the aim of ensuring that decisions about online safety are informed by their lived realities rather than based on assumptions.**

Over the course of the Online Safety Project, we engaged with **128 young people aged 11–18** across **14 schools and community groups** in Wales, supported by a youth advisory group of **19 Digital Guardians**.



**128 YOUNG PEOPLE**



**14 SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY GROUPS**



**19 DIGITAL GUARDIANS**

The Digital Guardians shaped the direction, design, and delivery of the work, ensuring young people's voices were central throughout. Young people told us that while online spaces offer many positives, including connection, learning, and support - they are also concerned about harmful content, inappropriate adults, misinformation, and the growing impact of Artificial Intelligence. Crucially, they emphasised that staying safe online should not be the responsibility of young people alone, and called for greater joint action from adults, decision makers, and technology companies to create safer online environments.

Our Digital Guardians proposed **four** recommendations they think decision makers and other influential people should implement and suggested a range of key changes needed to make this happen. A selection are presented here and the full list of changes suggested by young people are available in our full report.

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## BETTER EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT HOW TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

This would take place in schools and colleges and include involving young people in the development and delivery of the education. Informing young people about the risks of being online, the potential risks of not employing safety measures and what to do when you need help.



### KEY CHANGES NEEDED:

#### Suggested by young people:

- ✓ Ensuring young people have a trusted adult/digital safety officer in school they know they can talk to about their worries or problems.
- ✓ Hold regular online safety lessons/training for young people from an early age that cover safety settings/features; how to make safe profiles; the prevalence and uses of AI. Make sure that this is updated.



“ A lot of children are on social media and don't understand the right and wrongs of privacy and media.”

“ Educate young people on how to block or report inappropriate adults so they know how to.”

“ Teach us about cool settings.”

“ Young people may not know how to block or report inappropriate adults so we need to educate young people on how to block or report them so they know how to.”

“ Being informed on internet safety is important to me because it enables me to stay safe online in the first place.”



## INCREASE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY

This would involve finding out what both young people and adults' current opinions are on online safety as well as creating spaces for open conversations between adults (teachers, parents/carers, professionals) and young people about their time spent online and what being online means to them.



### KEY CHANGES NEEDED:

- ✓ Educate parents/carers on parental controls/safety measures.
- ✓ Education for all adults about the issues young people's experience online and the content they consume and about parental controls and safety measures.
- ✓ Encourage and support more open conversations between young people and adults.

“ Open dialogues are so important.”

“ Parents & children should discuss more their use of internet.”

“ I feel as though the negatives of the internet is all that people hear about nowadays, it would be nice for people to know about the good things it can do as well.”

“ It is good to talk and get advice from people who have more experience online.”

“ Parents/carers need to know how young people are using their phone.”

“ Tell your parents if something happens that you are worried about.”



## MORE AWARENESS ABOUT THE WIDESPREAD NATURE OF MISINFORMATION AND DECEPTION

This would involve social media platforms and other online spaces being required to put warning labels on content that might be misleading, for example, if someone posts something which isn't verified, or isn't who they say they are, or uses AI. Creating information campaigns about how to recognise if sources/websites and people are reliable and can be trusted.



### KEY CHANGES NEEDED:



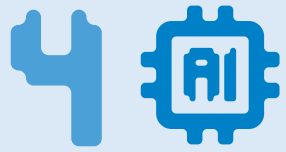
- ✓ Hold social media/apps accountable for their content and use warning or trust labels to help spot AI generated or misleading content and create age restrictions on certain content. Implement age restrictions on social media in line with children's development with different ages depending on the apps.
- ✓ Create age-specific kid-safe spaces online/apps and social media accounts.
- ✓ Better anti hacks and link checking software to combat people masking malicious links.
- ✓ Have default privacy settings – young people expressed a desire for “automatic privacy settings”.
- ✓ Implement warnings when people try to change their privacy settings. Apps should protect the users more and make it easier to keep private. They could give a warning before you put your account on public.

““ I feel as though it is scarily easy to lie about certain information on the internet, as information is often not checked well enough.”

““ It is easy to be scammed. Lots of young people fall for clickbait or scams.”

““ All accounts should automatically start off private.”

““ Adults should stop believing every Facebook article.”



## MORE AWARENESS OF THE RISKS OF USING AI

This would involve creating a culture where people talk about the effects AI has on learning and perceptions of the world. Creating information campaigns about the risks of AI and making sure that social media companies are expected and held responsible for including warning labels on platforms and other online spaces about whether content may be AI-generated.



### KEY CHANGES NEEDED:



- ✓ Educate about prevalence of AI - to help spot what is AI and what is not, it is important to talk about it more.
- ✓ Develop and make young people aware of warning or trust labels to help spot AI generated content and create age restrictions on certain content.
- ✓ Better processes for blocking and reporting issues – young people wanted blocking and reporting to work better. Platforms need to make reporting more reliable and to make sure further action follows after reports.

“ People can use AI in bad ways- to create fake people and accounts.”

“ Adults should not believe everything they see like AI videos.”

“ People change photos and videos with AI.”

“ AI can be used more for safety and monitoring indecency.”

“ Report buttons should actually work.”

# WHAT NOW?

**Platform and the NSPCC came together for this Online Safety Project with one clear intention: to put children and young people at the heart of conversations about online safety not just as young people, but as leaders and changemakers.**

This project has shown exactly why that mission matters. But this is only the beginning. We need leaders to listen to what children and young people are saying and take notice to change how they carry out their work to protect children and young people online. Children and young people are the future of our generations, and their voice deserves to be heard.

While this project comes to an end, our recommendations do not. We ask those in positions of influence to work together and take on the Digital Guardians' ideas and views and use them to drive meaningful change. Children and young people in Wales have spoken clearly about what they need to feel safer online. Now it is time for those voices to be heard, respected and acted upon. Together, we can build a future where children and young people can feel safe online.



Being a part of this project, I have felt welcomed and accepted to share my views and ideas on online safety. It's been a once in a lifetime, ever-changing experience that I'm grateful to be a part of.

Young people like us have a voice that deserves to be heard. We need to keep talking to each other, keep challenging the systems around us, and keep imagining better possibilities for how we all live and connect online.

Because when young people like us lead, change doesn't just happen, it accelerates.



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# ACCESS THE FULL REPORT

If you would like to read the full report, which details the context, approach, demographics, arrangements, sessions and the full extent of our insights, scan the QR code below.

