[GB] Ofcom Report Reveals Parents Unaware of how to Keep Children Safe Online

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One in eight parents are failing to take any action to protect their children online according to a new report by the UK broadcasting regulator Ofcom released on 15 January 2014.

The report, the first of three to be commissioned by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, asked parents of 5-15 year-olds how they kept their children safe in an online world. It concluded that 15% of parents either don't know how to activate such controls as family-friendly internet filters, or are unaware that they exist.

Children are increasingly participating in an online world, with the report revealing that the use of tablets has tripled in the last year amongst 8-11 year-olds and six in ten 12-15 year-olds now own a smartphone.

The Government has put pressure on UK Internet Service Providers to introduce network-level filters that screen pornography and inappropriate content for children, although this has proved controversial.

Ofcom suggests that service providers can help keep children safe online in a couple of ways - through filtering tools (for example those that can be applied to a child's device or on a particular network); and specific safety measures (age-verification tools, or privacy settings on social media sites). But it adds that while such filtering is valuable, parents must talk to their children about internet safety in order to ensure they stay protected.

The report found that while most parents are fairly confident in their children's use of the Internet, they are most concerned about with whom their child is in contact, rather than what kind of content they see. Nearly half of the 12-15s know someone who has suffered from online bullying, or who has found gossip about them or embarrassing photos being circulated.

Parents also felt at a disadvantage because they felt that their knowledge of the internet was rudimentary compared to their children. More than four in ten parents (44 %) with children aged between 8 and 11 say their child knows more about the internet than they do, rising to 63% for parents of 12-15 year-olds.

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The study also found that 18% of 12-15 year-olds know how to bypass internet filters, while almost 50% can delete their browsing history and 29% can amend settings to conceal their activity.

Ofcom Report on Internet Safety Measures, 15 January 2014

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/internet/internet-safety-measures.pdf

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