

# Department for Children, Schools and Families

## Parents & Internet Safety

### Report from HCI Discussion Groups 27 April – 1 May 2009

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## Revision history

Date	Author	Version	Change Reference & Summary
29 May 2009	Janet Salvoni	1.0	Original version

## Project background and objectives

Recent Ofcom research has indicated that 57% of parents say they do not know where to go for information on how to keep their children safe online.

At this stage, DCSF suspects this may be due to one or more factors such as – an inability to find the information on the internet, a lack of confidence in the information found, inconsistent information, and so on.

Indeed, preliminary research by RE-OW demonstrated that there is a plethora of information on internet security available for parents on the web.

The Byron Review recommended that one possible solution would be the creation of an online one-stop-shop for internet safety. It is possible this concept will be taken forward as the sole, or possibly one of a number of, solutions to this problem.

Before determining the most appropriate way forward, however, the DCSF is keen to fully investigate the reasons behind the Ofcom findings.

Accordingly, RedEye optimum.web (RE-OW) was asked to undertake research that would provide a clear picture of the 'problem landscape' when parents are looking for appropriate help and information online. In particular, the research should help to identify:

- The target audiences, their concerns and information needs;
- The various ways in which they go about finding relevant information (on and offline) and the problems encountered in the process;
- Parents' underlying thought processes that lead them to make choices regarding specific resources and information;
- The factors that determine whether they will seek help online or offline and at what points they may switch from one information source to another;
- Whether different parent segments behave differently or have different concerns and needs;
- Issues influencing the degree to which they trust / have confidence in the information they find online;
- Perceptions of government as a source of information;
- Their general perceptions of current online resources – how useful / strengths / weaknesses / omissions, etc.
- What tone and language works best with the target audiences
- Any other issues impacting targets' ability to understand and use the information they find online;
- How they use search engines;
- Whether any specific functionality would enhance their online experiences

And, in light of the findings, to identify any key issues that should be investigated further, in order to determine the most appropriate solution(s) going forward.

# 1. Research approach and methodology

## 1.1 HCI (Human Computer Interaction) Groups

RE-OW offers a specialist, bespoke methodology called HCI Groups which has been purposely designed to combine user-interaction with websites (or other digital interfaces) with qualitative group discussion.

The website interaction aspect of a group session involves each participant working independently at a computer screen, undertaking a series of pre-determined tasks. As the tasks are completed, each participant completes a feedback questionnaire which in turn delivers statistical (quantitative) data.

This approach aligns perfectly with the principles of human-computer interaction, which are to base findings and conclusions on what users really *do*, rather than what they say they will do. Accordingly, the quantitative data delivered by the interaction portion of each group session, serves to complement the qualitative data derived from the discussion that follows. In addition, whilst participants are undertaking the screen-based tasks, the moderator team observes, discreetly, what is occurring and notes any relevant issues.

In light of the specific objectives for this project, RE-OW recommended use of the HCI Groups methodology as it would bring to the fore any real issues encountered when parents seek relevant information online. Furthermore, the process of seeking relevant information online at the start of the session would undoubtedly assist in orientating participants' thoughts for the ensuing discussion.

## 1.2 Groups segmentation and recruitment

DCSF had provided RE-OW with details of the key internet safety issues to be explored by the research. These were: cyber-bullying; the use of parental controls software; gaming; grooming and pornography.

With these issues in mind – and mindful also of additional issues that might emerge in discussion (e.g. exposure to websites promoting extremist behaviour, the use of webcams) – it was clear to RE-OW that participants might need to discuss topics that are particularly sensitive and so it was possible that participants' attitudes to such topics would be influenced by their cultural and / or religious backgrounds.

Accordingly, RE-OW proposed (and it was agreed) that each group of research participants would be organised principally by:

- Ethnic / cultural background – in order to create a lively dynamic of like-minded individuals and to ensure participants were put at ease as much as possible, to allow for free discussion of their specific concerns;
- and
- The level of 'comfort' each individual has in relation to finding and understanding information online and then using / applying this information (with particular reference to the application of computer software). This would ensure that participants who consider themselves less technically aware would not feel intimidated by others of a more technically confident nature.

All recruitment was carried out by research recruitment specialists, working to a detailed and pre-agreed recruitment brief. In addition to the two key segmentation requirements described above, the brief was designed also to ensure:

- An appropriate level of internet usage amongst both participants and their children;
- That all participants were individuals who would instinctively use the internet as one of the first ports of call when seeking out information on any subject;
- That participants had children in the key age bands 7-11 years and 12-16 years;
- That participants represented a good spread of ages (25-35 years and 35 plus) and gender;
- That representation was provided across all socio economic groups

### 1.3 Format for the HCI Groups sessions

To derive maximum, quality data, from each group session, the format was as follows:

- Each group session ran for a maximum of two hours and was led by RE-OW's Head of User Insights, Janet Salvoni and supported by Senior Consultant, Winston Halls.
- Throughout, the moderator team gave close attention to potential sensitivities and to the fact that ethnic / cultural backgrounds are likely to go hand-in-hand with heightened sensitivities in relation to certain issues.
- Each session comprised three key stages:
  - **Stage A:** The lead moderator introduced participants to the purpose of the sessions, asked them to complete a short profiling questionnaire and engaged them very briefly in discussion before directing them to undertake a series of short on-screen tasks and provide feedback via a questionnaire.
  - **Stage B:** Using individual PCs, participants undertook information-gathering tasks using the internet, based on specific issue-related scenarios.

Each group focused on two of the key issues for exploration – either Bullying and Parental Controls; or Gaming and Grooming. This ensured adequate time to focus on each issue. NB: It was agreed that the issue of internet Pornography would be covered only in discussion but not via on-screen tasks.

During this stage participants used a mixture of free browsing (with Google as their start point) and they also visited some pre-selected, named sites as instructed by the moderator. These pre-selected sites provided a contrast of formats and styles.

Throughout, the moderator instructed participants to approach the tasks exactly as they would if surfing alone at home, and to seek answers to the questions that would form in their own minds if each scenario were a reality for them.

Their reactions to both the free-browsing activity and the experience of visiting the pre-selected sites, were captured via individual questionnaires that were completed as participants worked through the tasks. An example questionnaire is included at Appendix A.

The specific scenarios and corresponding pre-selected websites were as follows:

**Task A (Cyber-bullying)**

You have read an article in your newspaper saying that there has been a large increase in the number of children being harassed or bullied via email, via social networking websites such as Facebook and Bebo, and also via text messages. You want to find out more about this so that you are well informed and would be able to identify this if it were happening to your child. Use the internet to find more information.

**Pre-selected site:** [stopcyberbullying.org](http://stopcyberbullying.org)

**Task B (Parental Controls)**

Following a recommendation from a friend, you decide to control access to certain types of content on your child's computer. Though your friend has recommended the use of filtering software, he has not specified which brand of software to use and has not recommended any specific features / capabilities the software should have. Use the internet to find information on an appropriate software package.

**Pre-selected site:** [internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com](http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com)

**Task C (Gaming)**

Your child is spending a large proportion of his / her free time playing the online game 'World of Warcraft'. The game is available online throughout the world to both adults and children. You feel that the amount of time spent on the game may be affecting your child's behaviour and school work. Your child clearly enjoys the game but you would like to find out more about the potential risks involved in online gaming and what would be an appropriate level of time to spend playing games of this kind.

**Pre-selected site:** [getgamesmart.com](http://getgamesmart.com)

**Task D (Grooming)**

You suspect that your 14 year-old-child is exchanging emails with an adult who is not part of the family or known to you. Your child does not appear to be in immediate danger but nevertheless you are understandably concerned. You have heard of adults who prey on children online. You would like to get more information regarding this, so that you can discuss this with your child.

**Pre-selected site:** [Direct.gov.uk](http://Direct.gov.uk)

- **Stage C:** Participants were now engaged in a discussion facilitated by the lead moderator that focused on the issues covered in Stage B above, as well as other issues raised as being of concern to the group.
- The discussion was facilitated according to a pre-agreed discussion guide, but was moderated in a style that allowed exploration of any relevant topics or issues as raised by individual group participants. A copy of this discussion guide is included at Appendix B.
- The sessions were recorded for analysis purposes and all participants were appropriately advised.
- Each participant was provided with an incentive payment of £50.00.

## 1.4 Numbers and locations of groups

A total of 10 group sessions were held with six participants recruited to each group. This ensured that each ethnic grouping was represented by a minimum two groups and, that each of the four key issues could be explored on screen and in discussion by each of the agreed ethnic groupings, namely:

- Caucasian (white ethnicity)
- Asian non-Muslim
- Muslim
- Afro-Caribbean / Afro-Caribbean mixed race

To ensure the research delivered perspectives from both the North and the South of the country, the sessions were undertaken in London and Crewe. The table below shows the final running schedule of sessions and the code letters in the final column indicate the key issues covered:

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| A. Cyber-bullying    | C. Gaming   |
| B. Parental Controls | D. Grooming |

Group No.	Location	Date	Time	Group profile	On-screen tasks
1	London	27 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00 – 12:00	Asian / Confident	C, D
2	London	27 <sup>th</sup> April	13:00 – 15:00	Asian / Less Confident	A, B
3	London	27 <sup>th</sup> April	15:30 – 17:30	Muslim / Confident	A, B
4	London	28 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00 – 12:00	Afro-Caribbean / Confident	C, D
5	London	28 <sup>th</sup> April	13:00 – 15:00	Afro-Caribbean / Less Confident	A, B
6	London	28 <sup>th</sup> April	15:30 – 17:30	Muslim / Less Confident	C, D
7	Crewe	30 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00 – 12:00	Caucasian / Confident	C, D
8	Crewe	30 <sup>th</sup> April	13:00 – 15:00	Caucasian / Less Confident	A, B
9	Crewe	30 <sup>th</sup> April	15:30 – 17:30	Caucasian / Less Confident	C, D
10	Crewe	1 <sup>st</sup> May	10:00 – 12:00	Caucasian / Confident	A, B

The following chart shows, at a glance, the numbers and types of groups that focused on each of the key issues and illustrates that each individual issue was addressed by a total of five groups. Issues A and B were addressed by two confident groups and three less confident groups. Issues C and D were addressed by three confident groups and two less confident groups.

	<b>A. Cyber-bullying</b>	<b>B. Parental Controls</b>	<b>C. Gaming</b>	<b>D. Grooming</b>
Asian Confident			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Asian Less Confident	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Muslim Confident	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Muslim Less Confident			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Afro-Caribbean Confident			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Afro-Caribbean Less Confident	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Caucasian Confident 1			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Caucasian Confident 2	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Caucasian Less Confident 1	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Caucasian Less Confident 2			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>TOTAL GROUPS ADDRESSING</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>



## 1.5 Research participants

60 participants were recruited and a total of 53 actually participated in the sessions as a result of some very late cancellations due to unforeseen circumstances.

The chart below shows the final make-up of each group in summary. Further profiling details for participants are shown later within the findings section of this report.

Group 1 – Asian Confident (A/C)			
Participant 1	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 2	Female	46-55 years	2 children
Participant 3	Female	25-35 years	1 child
Participant 4	Male	46-55 years	3 children
Participant 5	Male	56+ years	2 children
Participant 6	Female	25-35 years	1 child
Group 2 – Asian Less Confident (A/LC)			
Participant 7	Female	36-45 years	1 child
Participant 8	Female	46-55 years	1 child
Participant 9	Male	25-35 years	1 child
Participant 10	Male	46-55 years	4 children
Group 3 – Muslim Confident – (M/C)			
Participant 11	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 12	Male	36-45 years	2 children
Participant 13	Female	25-35 years	1 child
Group 4 - Afro-Caribbean Confident – (A-C/C)			
Participant 14	Male	25-35 years	1 child
Participant 15	Female	46-55 years	2 children
Participant 16	Female	25-35 years	3 children
Participant 17	Male	36-45 years	3 children
Participant 18	Female	36-45 years	4 children
Participant 19	Male	36-45 years	1 child

<b>Group 5 – Afro-Caribbean Less Confident (A-C/LC)</b>			
Participant 20	Female	46-55 years	4 children
Participant 21	Female	36-45 years	2 children
Participant 22	Male	36-45 years	2 children
Participant 23	Female	36-45 years	2 children
Participant 24	Female	36-45 years	1 child
Participant 25	Male	46-55 years	1 child
<b>Group 6 – Muslim Less Confident (M/LC)</b>			
Participant 26	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 27	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 28	Female	36-45 years	3 children
Participant 29	Male	25-35 years	1 child
Participant 30	Female	36-45 years	4 children
Participant 31	Male	25-35 years	1 child
<b>Group 7 – Caucasian Confident (W/C)</b>			
Participant 32	Male	25-35 years	4 children
Participant 33	Male	46-55 years	3 children
Participant 34	Female	46-55 years	1 child
Participant 35	Female	46-55 years	3 children
Participant 36	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 37	Male	36-45 years	4 children
<b>Group 8 – Caucasian Less Confident (W/LC)</b>			
Participant 38	Female	36-45 years	3 children
Participant 39	Female	25-35 years	3 children
Participant 40	Male	56+ years	2 children
Participant 41	Male	56+ years	1 child
<b>Group 9 – Caucasian Less Confident (W/LC)</b>			
Participant 42	Female	36-45 years	3 children
Participant 43	Female	25-35 years	1 child

Participant 44	Female	46-55 years	3 children
Participant 45	Male	56+ years	2 children
Participant 46	Male	46-55 years	1 child
Participant 47	Male	46-55 years	2 children
<b>Group 10 – Caucasian Confident (W/C)</b>			
Participant 48	Female	36-45 years	1 child
Participant 49	Female	46-55 years	1 child
Participant 50	Male	36-45 years	1 child
Participant 51	Female	25-35 years	2 children
Participant 52	Female	25-35 years	1 child
Participant 53	Male	46-55 years	2 children

## 2. Executive summary

This summary covers the key findings to emerge from the research and includes, where relevant, suggestions for future action that we believe should be considered.

### 2.1 Currently, parents are not seeking information proactively in relation to keeping their children safe online

As stated at the beginning of this document, the starting point for this research project was a requirement to explore what lies behind the recent Ofcom finding that 57% of parents do not know where to go for, or cannot find, information on how to keep their children safe online.

And, specifically, RE-OW was asked to explore DCSF's own suspicions that, in relation to finding relevant information on the internet, the problem could potentially lie in there being a *surfeit* of information, with issues such as inconsistency and 'what to trust' coming in to play.

Against this background, it was surprising to find that when it comes to keeping children safe online:

- All the parents were aware of a range of online dangers – albeit not all parents were aware of all the potential risks;
- All parents took the issue of online danger seriously;
- None of the parents had sought out information proactively from any 'official' or 'specialised' sources relating to these risks (either on or offline) because they did not feel there was any necessity to do so - any more, they explained, than they would seek out specific information on issues such as predators targeting children in the real world.
- Parents' said their awareness and knowledge of the various online dangers was driven by the media reporting specific incidents, by speaking with their own children and also by talking to other parents or teachers.
  - However, for many of the participants, the research sessions did serve to demonstrate that there were issues and potential dangers they were not previously aware of - whereas before the sessions they had thought themselves to be sufficiently knowledgeable.
- When probed to determine whether parents could envisage situations where they might wish to seek out information proactively, a number said that a potential 'tipping point' for proactive information sourcing would be if their own child was directly affected by a specific issue.
  - Interestingly, however, the great majority said that the internet was not a front of mind, 'first port of call' for information in respect of online dangers – even though all participants did regard the internet as a 'first port call' for seeking information generally;
  - And it is also interesting that even those few participants whose children had been directly affected by an issue had not, before the research sessions, used the *internet* to look for relevant information or advice.

- Parents said they keep their children safe by:
  - a) Closely supervising their online activities when they first start to use the internet (i.e. at a young age);
  - b) Insisting on being among the ‘friends’ allowed access to their children’s personal pages on social networking sites;
  - c) Being given details of all the sites and / or chat rooms their children visit;
  - d) Checking their children’s online activity histories;
  - e) Talking to them about the potential risks, using a ‘common sense’ approach in the same way as they talk with their children about dangers and risks in the real world;
  - f) Setting boundaries and guidelines for internet usage and then trusting their children to abide by those guidelines;
  - g) Encouraging their children to come and talk with them if they ever find themselves in a potential risk situation;
  - h) Speaking with other parents and teachers;
  - i) Use of filtering software (though this is not universal – see 3.4 below)

Whilst the above findings were consistent across all the 10 groups, it would not be appropriate to draw the conclusion that *no* parents seek out information online, as the research was qualitative and so not statistically significant

It is, however, appropriate in the light of the consistency of these findings and the number of groups undertaken, to conclude that currently, *most* parents are *most likely not* seeking such information in a proactive way (on or offline) and most probably feel they know both *what* they need to warn their children about and *how* to go about doing this.

**NB:** It should also be noted, in this connection, that the participating parents went to great lengths to stress the strength of the relationships they have with their children and the ease, therefore, both of tackling subjects of this kind with them and of detecting the signs of ‘something not being right’. In practice, however, it is likely (particularly in the case of those with teenage children) that having certain conversations is not necessarily as straightforward as parents would want to suggest in a group discussion.

This hypothesis appears to stand up, because when these findings were explored in more detail, many participants did suggest that having now been part of the group research they would perhaps be more inclined in the future to seek out information online – both in relation to issues about which they are not particularly well informed, (in order to give their children the broadest and soundest guidance) *and* to seek some informed help / guidance on how to approach and *discuss* these with their children.

Clearly, however, parents not involved in the research would have no such prompt to change their current behaviour.

## 2.2 The specific needs and concerns of parents are common across all profiles - although ethnicity *appears* to have a slight influence

The concerns parents had in relation to the safety of children using the internet were largely universal and certainly were not influenced by parents' social class, by their geography or lifestyle (i.e. North / South, Rural / Urban) or by their own personal confidence levels regarding the sourcing, understanding and application of information (e.g. understanding and applying filtering software).

Ethnic /cultural heritage did, however, appear to have a *some* impact, with some Asian parents expressing particular concern about the impact of 'peer pressure' (i.e. that their children might be influenced by non-Asian friends to seek out websites containing information parents would not like them to see – principally pornography); and some Muslim parents expressing concern about potential exposure to extremist material online (the specific example was given of a site showing video footage of a beheading).

It should be noted, however, that these specific concerns of Asian and Muslim parents were each expressed in only one of the two groups representing each respective ethnicity. Therefore, further research would be required to determine whether either of these concerns reflects a definite trend within those ethnic groups specifically.

However, irrespective of there being any significant ethnic-based requirement for information on peer pressure or extremism, we believe it is appropriate that any new information resources that may be developed by government should include guidance on dealing with these issues as a matter of course.

## 2.3 A child's age, gender and technical knowledge has the greatest impact on parental online safety concerns

The factors that definitely did influence the type of and degree of parental concern regarding internet safety were as follows and were common across all groups:

- **The age of the child** – parents said they only become seriously concerned about online safety when a child reaches the age where internet supervision must be relaxed and the child allowed more freedom / independence. Accordingly, the greatest level of concern was amongst parents with children in the 12-16 years age group.
- **Children' greater technical knowledge** – parents felt that their children will eventually be able to override any software-related controls they put in place. This concern was common to parents in both the 'confident' and the 'less confident' groups and to both younger and older parents.
- **The gender of the child.** The parents of boys were particularly concerned about the potential impact on behaviour of violent games, whilst the parents of girls felt the games their daughters play are harmless. On the other hand, the issue of games (and other online leisure pursuits) being a distraction from school work, was of equal concern.

The parents of girls were more concerned about the dangers of grooming than the parents of boys, but not exclusively so.

## **2.4 The use of filtering software is not universal**

Whilst the majority of parents participating in the research said they do use filtering software to some degree, a number chose deliberately not to use it. Generally these were parents of children in the 12-16 years age group who felt that their children would very be able very quickly to override or deactivate the software and that the best filter was simply one of trusting your children, based on educating them and having a good relationship with them. These parents also felt that restricted access at home had limited benefits as their children are also accessing the internet when they are away from the home.

Interestingly, however, some parents were not aware that there is indeed a wide range of software available that offers a wide spectrum of features.

## **2.5 The volume of online information available does not cause major problems and it does appear to be meeting parents' requirements**

When undertaking the on-screen information-gathering tasks, only in relation to the Cyber-bullying task, did a significant majority say the level of results delivered were either 'far too many' or 'too many'.

For all the other tasks, the single most popular rating given for the level of results delivered was 'neither too many nor too few'. Furthermore, for the Grooming task, a number of parents even said that the number of results delivered was 'too few'.

In discussion, the overall sentiment was that whilst internet searches do seem to deliver a lot of results, by and large it is valuable to have a range of information to compare and contrast.

Similarly, for all tasks, more participants said they found 'exactly' or 'some of' what they were looking for than said they were unsure about the relevance or trustworthiness of the information; or than said they had difficulties comprehending jargon.

Furthermore, the numbers saying they found *no* relevant information were very low for all tasks and none said this in relation to the Cyber-bullying task.

## **2.6 Government websites and those from other 'major' names are the most trusted**

Despite parents' keenness to read a range of information, all participants stressed very forcefully, that websites provided by government (e.g. Directgov), by major brand names (e.g. Microsoft, BBC) and by known charities or NGOs (e.g. Childline) were the most trusted.

They also felt more comfortable with the information provided by UK-based websites (rather than the many US sites found) particularly in relation to advice given regarding actions to take and / or the reporting of suspected online crime (e.g. in the case of Grooming).

Many of the participants then said it would be helpful if these 'trusted' sites always appeared at the top of search results lists. One participant said he would like all government sites to appear in a 'group' in search results and a number said that some kind of help with search terms to use would be helpful.

Interestingly, when a list of ‘official terms’ used to denote a variety of online threats was shown to participants, the majority said they would not have any trouble determining what these meant – even if they had not heard them before (e.g. many had not encountered the term ‘online multiplayer games’). However, having greater knowledge of these *in advance* of a search would prove beneficial.

## **2.7 Parents’ views are mixed on the merits of information sites directed specifically at children rather than parents**

In undertaking the on-screen tasks, parents were encountered a number of different sites, some of which were created specifically for children themselves to use. For example, sites giving information on cyber-bullying, both from the perspective of the bully and the bullied.

The participating parents had mixed views on how valuable they thought such sites were. Some thought them very useful whilst others insisted that children facing issues such as bullying or grooming would not look online for such help, as they would simply turn to their parents for guidance.

It is RE-OW’s view that the latter sentiment should be noted with caution as it is possible this is a further reflection of the ‘strength of parent / child relationship’ that parents’ may wish to convey in a group discussion.

Interestingly, a female participant in one group had herself worked with traumatised children and her view was that sources of advice and guidance designed for children to access directly themselves (both on and offline) are highly valuable.

## **2.8 Some parents would welcome a public awareness campaign from government that highlights online dangers and then drives them to relevant online (and other) information sources**

Having reached the point in the sessions where participants had realised that they were not necessarily fully informed of all the potential dangers facing their children on the internet and (for some) having determined that seeking informed help / information only when their child has experienced an incident might be leaving things too late; a suggestion was made by more than one group that the government should launch a public awareness campaign that would elevate the issue of child internet safety in the national consciousness – and they cited specifically, campaigns that had done this for the dangers posed by alcohol abuse, drink driving and unprotected sex.

In all the groups where this suggestion was put forward, general agreement and enthusiasm was strong with the following being proposed:

- A television advertising campaign with some films targeted at parents and some specially designed to educate children. The messages should not only highlight the dangers but also drive parents and children towards specific information sources both on and offline;
- The use of soap opera storylines to highlight the dangers – again seeking to target both parents and children through the choice of programmes (Hollyoaks was cited as the best soap opera to reach children).
- NB: It should be noted in this connection that most participants were not in favour of leafleting campaigns, saying they rarely read such materials that come through their doors.



## 2.9 There is potentially a role for a one-stop-shop

Although this research project was not designed to explore or validate a government one-stop-shop, such a concept was raised spontaneously.

When discussing the number of results delivered by internet search engines and the trust parents have in government sites; and also when discussing a potential public awareness campaign that would drive parents to credible online information sources; the concept of a government 'one-stop-shop' website was mentioned by more than one group – actually using that terminology.

As highlighted before, parents did not suggest they would not wish to visit other information sites also but there certainly was unprompted interest in a site provided by government that would give core information on all the key child internet safety issues.

In this respect, those participants who had visited the Direct.gov site as part of the Grooming task, used it as an example of the kind of clear, simple, no-frills, to-the-point presentation of information they would expect from any new government online facility.

If such a facility is developed then parents stated that access to the following information would be useful and so its inclusion should be considered:

- Explanations of the key threats facing children using the internet with advice on how to deal with these – including guidance on how to raise and discuss more sensitive issues with children.
- Listings for the 'official terms' used for the different online threats with guidance on using these to improve results when using search engines.
- Details of the law, how to initiate a legal process and the associated penalties in relation to internet safety crimes where prosecutions may be brought (e.g. Grooming).
- All about filtering software with specific recommended products (though it was recognised that government may not be able to make specific recommendations).
- Links to other, possibly more specialised, sites (e.g. sites that deal exclusively with a specific issue);
- Guidelines for the amount of time children should be allowed to spend online – generally and in relation to specific activities such as gaming.

## 2.10 Further considerations and validations will be important in determining the way(s) forward

The findings of this research give rise to a number of key questions that are pertinent to determining next steps. These include:

- If these qualitative findings are indicative of parents' attitudes and behaviours on a national scale, is there a genuine need for government to provide any more information / help in relation to Child online safety? (Parents are not proactively seeking information, but they do take the issues seriously and they are monitoring and providing guidance to their children in the same way as they do for offline threats).

- For parents who do choose to seek information online there is much already available which appears to meet their needs. Perhaps an appropriate course of action would be to work with existing government websites (such as Direct.gov, CEOP) and the owners of other respected / UK sites (such as Microsoft, the BBC, Childline) to provide more linkage and enhanced SEO to ensure parents can more easily find their way to the trusted and comprehensive information?
- If, however, government feels that the case is strong for parents *to be made aware of 'what they don't know'* in relation to internet safety, then is the suggestion of a public awareness campaign a sound course of action to encourage proactive sourcing of information? Is there a danger, for example, that such a campaign could be viewed as unnecessary scare-mongering? Certainly any such campaign would require thorough concept testing before launch.
- If a one-stop-shop or other government source(s) of information is developed to address these issues, without a public awareness campaign how else might parents be encouraged to seek out this information?

To help address these questions and to ensure the most appropriate future actions are taken, RE-OW recommends:

- The findings of this research study are considered in the context of other relevant research that may have been undertaken by government and other credible organisations in order to arrive at the fullest possible picture of the issue landscape.
- That any of the key findings felt to be *especially* pertinent to the decision-making process are further tested quantitatively to ensure these are indicative of the national picture.
- Before embarking on major initiatives, further research is used to validate these and ensure public reaction and potential take-up / usage is accurately assessed.

### 3. Detailed findings

This section presents, in detail, all of the key findings to emerge from this research study.

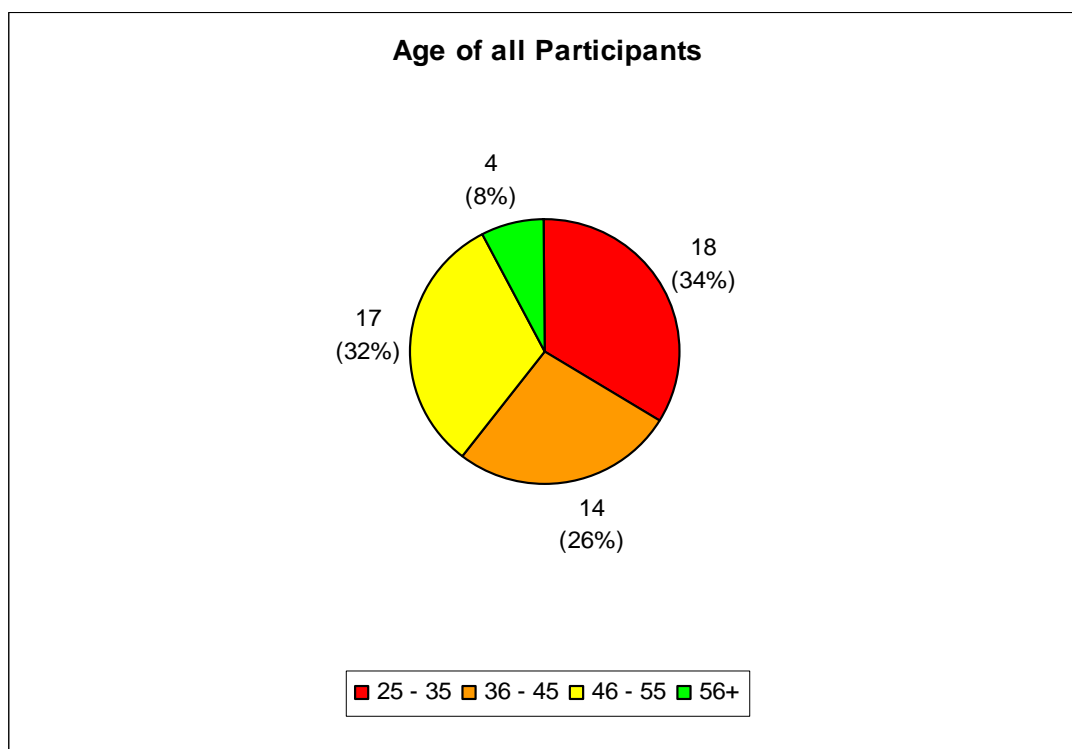
The statistical data was gathered via the questionnaire packs completed by each participant. These packs allowed the collection of profiling data and participants' individual reactions to the on-screen tasks.

The qualitative data was gathered both in discussion and by observing the participants during the on-screen portion of each group session.

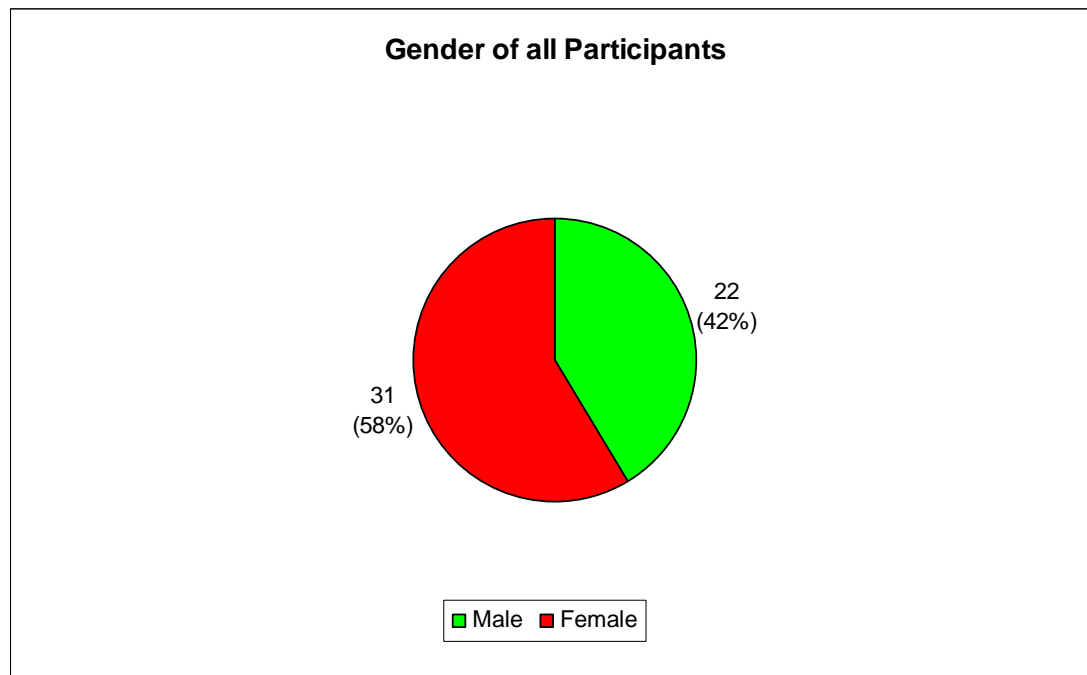
The findings have been presented under headings designed to highlight the key issues that emerged – the most important of which have been referenced previously in the Executive Summary section, with the addition of further insight / commentary.

A benefit of RE-OW's proprietary HCI Groups methodology is that it enables many issues to surface both quantitatively and qualitatively. Accordingly, many of the following sections contain aspects of both sets of data.

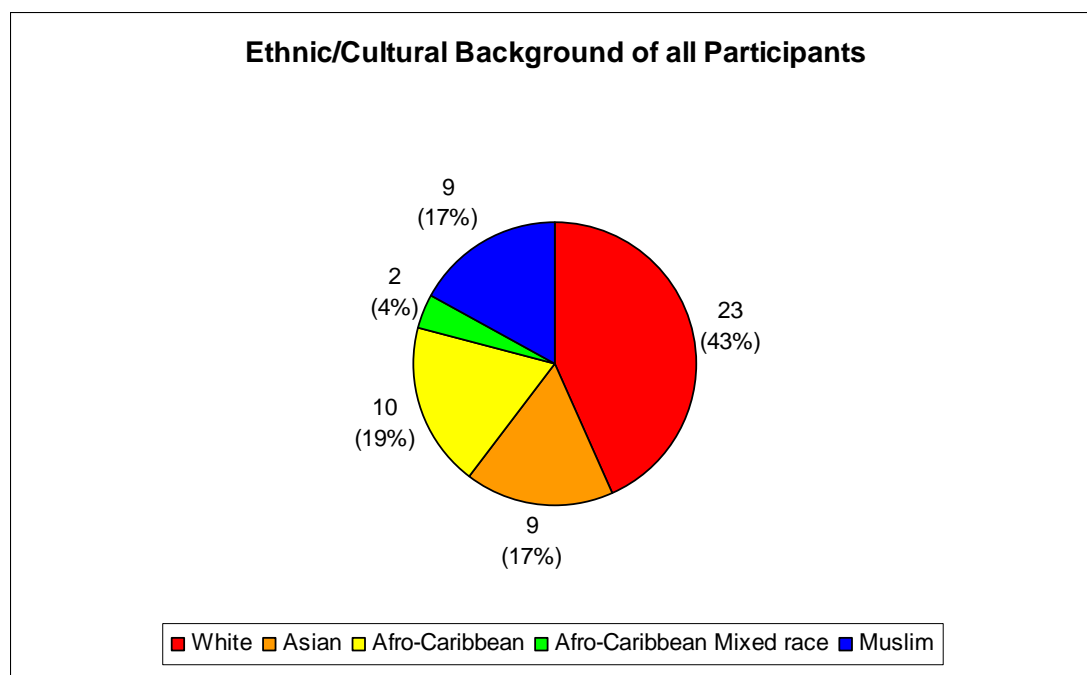
#### 3.1 Participant profiling data



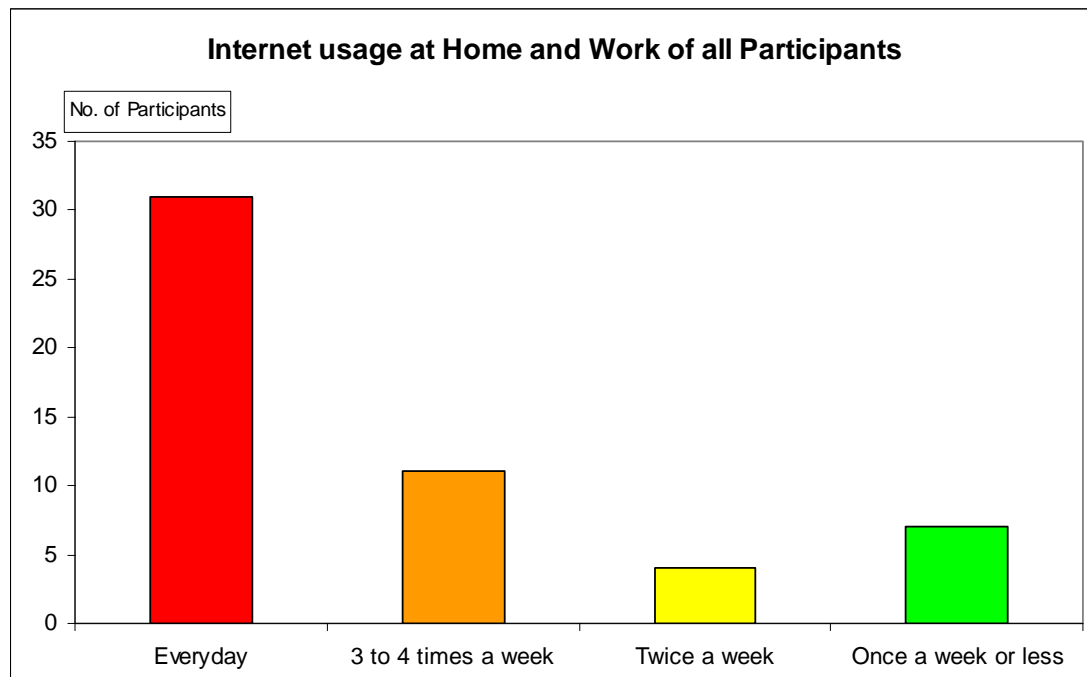
Participating parents were aged 25 years and over, with representation fairly evenly spread across the 25-35, 36-45 and 46-55 years age bandings. A small number of participants (a total of four) were aged over 56.



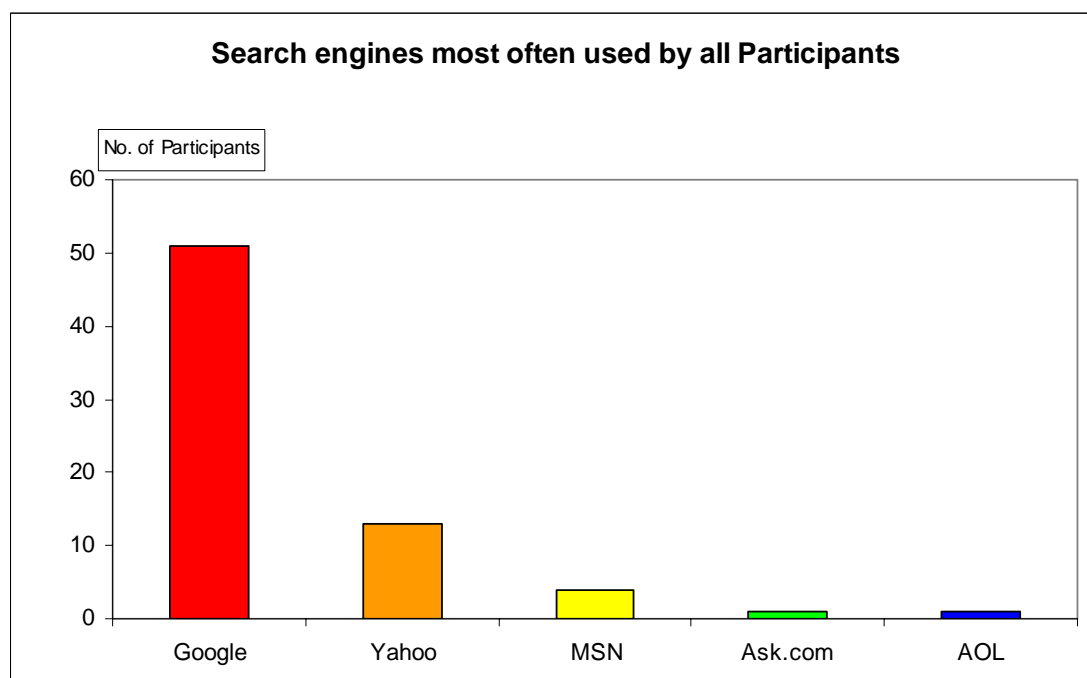
The number of participating mothers was, at 58%, a little higher than participating fathers but overall gender representation was well balanced.



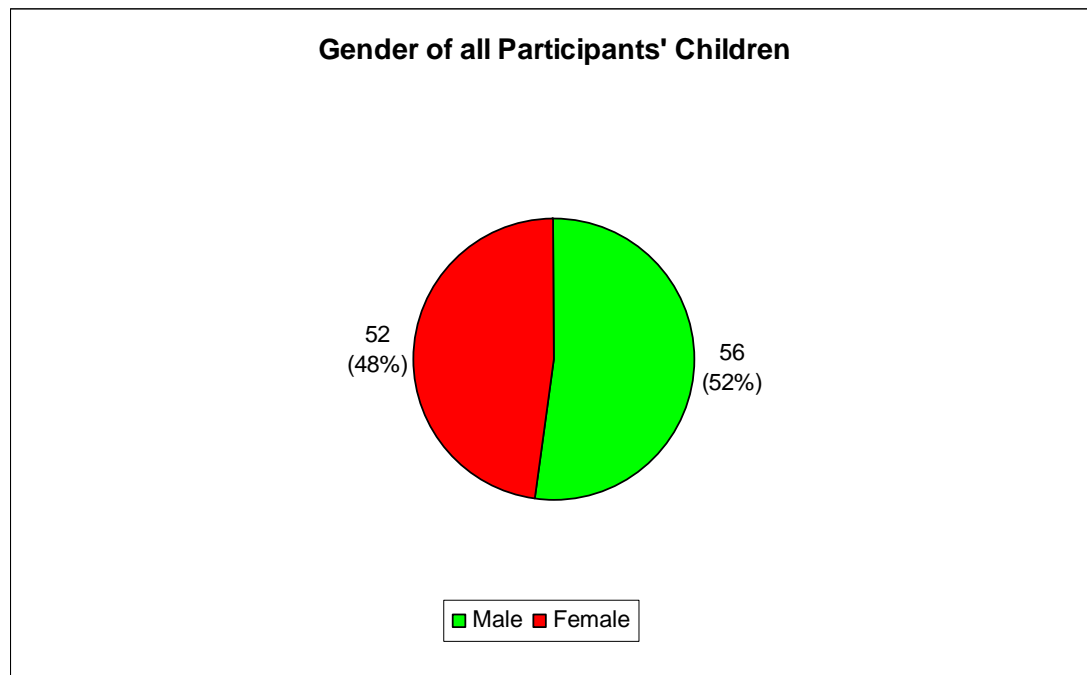
Participants representing ethnic / cultural minority backgrounds comprised just over half the total sample (57%) and were drawn from the Muslim, non-Muslim Asian and Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean / mixed race groups.



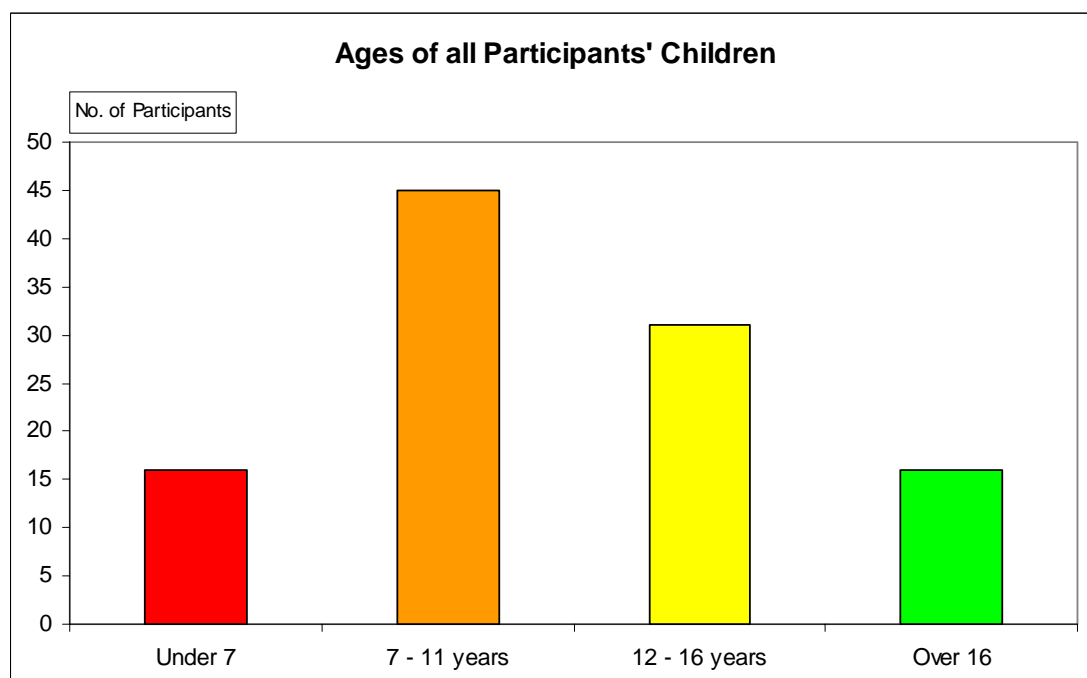
All participating parents were regular internet users with a large majority using the internet on a daily basis. It was also a requirement of participants that, when seeking information on any subject matter, the internet would be one of their first ports of call.



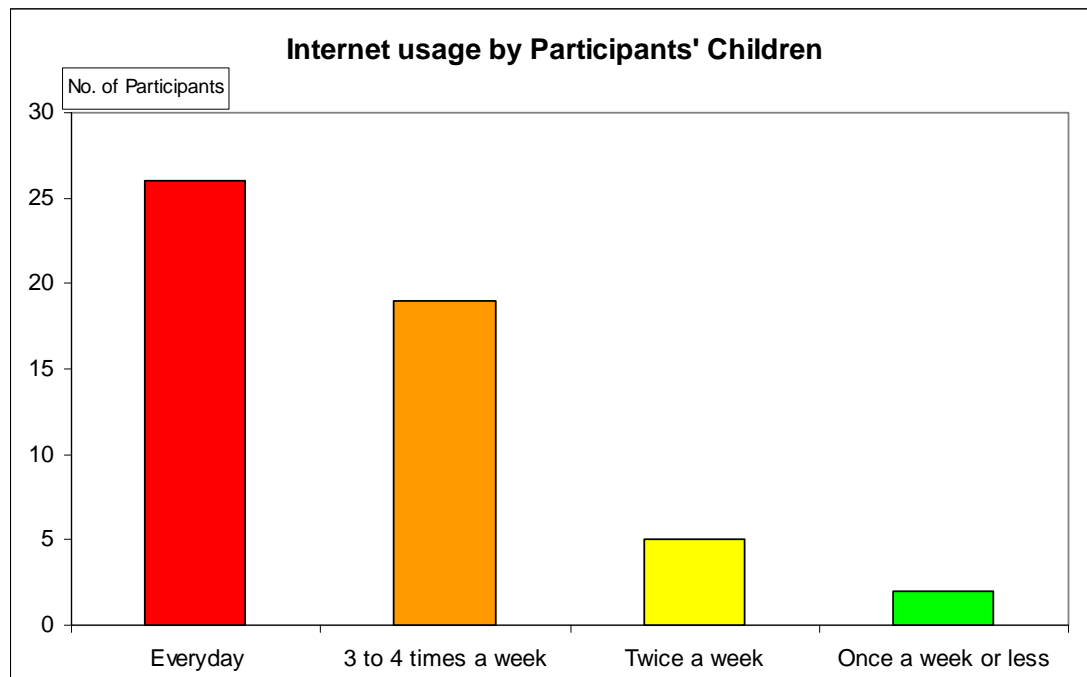
Not surprisingly, Google emerged as the most popular search engine used followed, some way behind, by Yahoo. Participants were asked to indicate all engines they used on a regular basis and, as the numbers above indicate, they do not stick exclusively to one engine despite the overwhelming popularity of Google.



The numbers of male and female children across the total sample of parents were in almost equal proportions. This was important to provide data reflecting concerns for internet safety that might have been child gender led.



It was a requirement for participation that all parents should have children in the 7-11 or 12-16 years age bandings (or both). However, as the above chart shows, some participants also had children whose ages fell outside of these bands.



Not surprisingly, internet usage by participants' children was high, with the majority stating their children do this every day. In discussion it was confirmed that older children, on average, used the internet more than younger children.

## 3.2 Target audiences' and their child online safety concerns

### The same concerns were common to all groups with some slight ethnic variances

Across all groups, the concerns parents had in relation to the safety of their children when using the internet were universal and were not influenced by parents' social class, by their geography or lifestyle (i.e. North / South, Rural / Urban) or by their own personal confidence levels regarding the sourcing, understanding and application of information (e.g. understanding and applying filtering software).

The ethnic /cultural backgrounds of parents did appear, however, to have a *slight* impact.

Asian parents expressed more concern than Caucasian parents about the impact of 'peer pressure' – i.e. that their children might be influenced by non-Asian friends (who may be raised in less strict homes) to seek out websites containing information parents would not like them to see. In this respect the concerns were mainly concerning pornography.

Caucasian and Afro-Caribbean parents had the same concerns in relation to the undesirability of exposure to such material, but they did not specifically raise the issue of 'peer pressure' from children brought up in perceived more relaxed environments. Their concerns focused simply on the dangers of their children arriving at pornographic websites – whether deliberately or accidentally.

In one group of Muslim parents, concern was raised about potential exposure to extremist material online, with one parent citing the specific example of a site showing video footage of a beheading. Others in the same group also mentioned the availability of weapons online.

*"When I was a teenager some friends showed me a website with a video of a man being beheaded. That image will stay with me for the rest of my life and I would never want my children to see anything like that."*

Muslim Parent, Group 3, Confident

It should be noted, however, that the specific Asian and Muslim concerns described above were each expressed in only one of the two groups representing the respective ethnicity. It should also be noted that 'peer pressure' was not raised in any of the Muslim groups, although a number of the Muslim participants were also Asian. Further research would be required, therefore, to determine whether either of these concerns reflects a *significant* concern trend within those ethnic groups.

Factors that did, on the other hand, emerge as having *some* direct influence on the type of and degree of parental concern regarding internet safety and that were common to all the groups were:

- **The age of the child**

Parents said they only really become concerned about online safety when a child reaches the age where they as parents feel they must relax supervision and allow that child more freedom / independence when using the internet.

The greater parental concerns, therefore, were prevalent principally amongst those with children in the 12-16 years age group

The research found that generally, children begin using the internet at an early age – often around five years. Their internet usage at this point is mainly for games that are both educational and recreational and, as would be expected, they are entirely supervised while online on a one-to-one basis by parents.



Similarly, when a child enters the 7-11 years age banding, parents continue to provide one-to-one supervision. However, it is during this age banding that the way in which parental supervision is provided changes. As children reach the upper limits of the age banding, parents introduce slightly more distanced supervision, with the computer being in a common area of the home (living room or kitchen) from where parents are still able to keep watch and are so aware of the websites visited and the activities undertaken. Furthermore, most parents of children in the 7-11 years age band said they apply additional controls such as stipulating exactly which sites their children are able to visit, checking children's browsing history, installing filtering software (see 3.3 for more detail on use of filtering software) and so on.

Once children move into the 12-16 years banding, however, concerns become greater as parents feel they must now withdraw further and allow children increased independence.

A critical point for heightened concern relates to when parents accept that the time has come when their child will no longer accept close supervision and the child must be allowed to use the computer in the privacy of his / her own bedroom.

- **The greater technical knowledge of children versus their parents**  
Parents felt that their children will eventually be able to override any software-related controls they put in place. This belief was common to parents in both the 'confident' and the 'less confident' groups and to both younger and older parents. It was clear that no matter if the parents themselves were computer / software confident, or indeed if they had grown up with technology themselves, they recognised that advances are rapid and therefore assumed their children would always be one step ahead.
- **The gender of the child.** The parents of boys were definitely more concerned than the parents of girls about the overall amount of time spent playing online games generally and the potential impacts of violent games. The issue of time spent online that could be better devoted to schoolwork concerned everyone, but this also served to highlight the perceptions of Asian parents that they are more strict than non-Asian parents.

*"In the Asian culture we are more concerned with education and this is where there a big difference with the European cultures."*

Asian Parent, Group 1, Confident

Parents of girls said that, by and large, their daughters are not particularly interested in playing online games – other than those related to popular TV series or films such as Hannah Montana. Accordingly, any concerns that the parents of girls have in relation to playing games is related to the amount of time spent playing and any affect that might have on school work, rather than any long term impacts of gaming on the behaviour of their child, because the actual subject matter of the games girls favour is felt to be harmless.

**The range of issues that concern parents is broad**

Across the 10 HCI groups there were some parents who had actually needed to deal with issues of online safety and in each case the parents said they had tackled these by talking to their children and some had spoken to teachers or other parents. But as already highlighted, none had sought out information or guidance online:

In Group 9 (Caucasian, Less Confident) a father with a 13 year-old girl had suspected his child might be corresponding with unknown adults through chat rooms and social networking sites;

The 15 year-old-son of another father in Group 9 had become heavily involved in online gambling;

In Group 1 (Asian, Confident) a mother had found her 12 year-old daughter was in contact with an adult male via a chat room who was conducting the conversations in the guise of a child;

In Group 1, the same mother also has a 16 year-old son who was innocently made to appear to be an online bully on account of another boy finding out her son's MSN password. The other boy then carried a cyber-bullying campaign masquerading as the participant's son.

Irrespective of personal experience, however, all said they take their children's online safety seriously and the range of issues cited as being of concern included those pre-identified for discussion and online exploration within the groups.

It is important to note, however, that none of the parents were aware of all the issues raised – their knowledge, as highlighted earlier, being driven by incidents highlighted in the media, by talking to other parents and by talking with their own children.

Across the 10 groups, the range of issues raised as being of concern is listed below:

**Time spent online in non-educational pursuits**

Even when children are engaged in harmless online activity, parents said they worry about the impact this would have on school work. A number also had concerns that online activity was undermining interest in more traditional and / or healthier pursuits such as meeting up with friends, playing sports outside of the home and so on.

**Gaming**

The potential impact of violent games on a child's behaviour was a particular concern to the parents of boys. The parents of girls said that the games played by their daughters were harmless, so their concerns were related only to the overall time spent and the distraction this caused to both school work and more traditional child pursuits.

*Smoking warnings tell me each time that it will kill me – why can't warning messages be put on the internet?"*

Asian Parent, Group 1, Confident

*"I'm concerned that gaming can lead to kids acting out what they play"*

Afro-Caribbean Parent, Group 4, Confident

*"I know of a 7-year-old who pulled a knife and threatened to kill a friend over a game."*

Afro-Caribbean Parent, Group 4, Confident

**Grooming of children by adults**

All parents were very concerned about this issue – with the parents of girls being even more concerned than the parents of boys. The greatest fear is of adults posing as children themselves in chat room and / or on social networking sites.

**Cyber-bullying**

Awareness of this issue was not universal across the participant sample, but aware parents had it high on their agendas.

Whilst the parents of both and girls expressed this concern – and one participating mother had direct experience of cyber-bullying carried out by boys – generally there was a feeling that the perpetrators of cyber-bullying were most likely to be girls and accordingly, so too were the victims more likely to be girls. Parents felt that boys are more inclined to carry out physical bullying, whereas girls gravitate towards the more psychological and ‘distanced’ intimidation that the cyber-space makes possible. Interestingly, the mother in group 10 who had worked with child bullies and child bullying victims supported this as being generally a correct assumption.

*“Girls are more prone to be cyber-bullies as it is not physical like boys would be.”*

Caucasian parent, Group 7, Confident

**Access to pornography**

This issue was very high on the agenda of all the participating parents and their concerns were that the nature of some of the material available online is of an extreme, hardcore variety.

The parents of teenage children – and teenage boys in particular – were worried that their children would access such material when seeking to satisfy the natural curiosity that drove previous generations towards far less explicit ‘top shelf’ magazines.

For the parents of younger children, the greatest concern was accidental discovery of pornographic material, resulting from an internet search that could innocently contain certain key words or misspelt words.

*“All kids play online games, but finding pornography online is the biggest concern – the ease with which porn can be accessed is worrying.”*

Caucasian parent, Group 7, Confident

*“I worry that a young child could spell a word wrong and get to pornography sites.”*

Caucasian parent, Group 9, Less Confident

**Online gambling**

The concern is that teenagers may become involved in online gambling and as a result lose money (which may not even be their own) and, ultimately, that they may even become addicted to online gambling. One parent had direct experience of this and had very strong views of the dangers.

**The ineffectiveness of date of birth entry to restrict access**

Discussion around the online gambling issue highlighted a general concern that the requirements to specify age on certain websites are ineffective as children are able to gain access by entering false date of birth information. Whilst the participating parents understood the difficulties in overcoming this situation, it did not lessen their concerns.

### **Social networking sites and chat rooms**

Whilst social networking websites and chat rooms are not problems per se, parents felt they exacerbate problems – such as children spending too much time online; or they provide an environment in which other dangers can flourish – such as bullying and grooming.

Another key concern expressed by parents was that their children might publish too much personal information on their social networking pages and this was something the participating parents said they made a special point of warning their children against and also something they checked on a regular basis.

*“It’s much easier for predators online as they can create profiles to be anyone.”*

Caucasian parent, Group 7, confident

### **Use of webcams**

The participating parents had a number of concerns relating to the use of webcams, the most frequently mentioned being that adults might exploit children by exposing them to pornographic images / activities or even encourage the children to engage in similar activity.

### **Access to websites promoting extremist behaviour**

This issue was raised specifically by one Muslim group. However, it is reasonable to conclude that parents from all ethnic groups would be concerned if their children were, either deliberately or inadvertently, exposed to such material.

## **3.3 The measures that parents take to keep their children safe online**

### **The use of filtering software is not universal**

Although the majority of parents participating in the research said they do use filtering software to some degree, a number chose deliberately not to use it. Generally these were parents of children in the 12-16 years age group who felt that their children would very be able very quickly to override or deactivate the software and that the best filter was simply one of trusting their children, based on educating them and having a good relationship with them.

Interestingly, however, some parents were not aware of the range of software available and its sophistication. And of these, some were aware only of the filtering that is made possible by their internet Service Providers and the settings that can be applied to search engines such as Google. Those who were not previously aware expressed interest in looking further at software options. Though once again, those with children in the older age group suspected that software options were likely to have limited effectiveness long term due to the technical knowledge of their children.

Overall filtering software was felt to have the greatest value by parents with children in the 7-11 years age band who believed it would play an important role in preventing inadvertent sourcing of pornographic material as a result of quite innocent free searching exercises.

A comment made in a number of groups – in particular the groups that undertook the Parental Controls onscreen exercise and, within that, had visited the internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com website – was that sophisticated software should be available to parents free of charge, in the same way that basic filtering support is.

In addition to filtering software, across the groups, parents explained a range of measures they use to keep their children safe online. These were:

- Closely supervising their online activities when they first start to use the internet (i.e. at a young age);
- Insisting on being among the ‘friends’ allowed access to their children’s personal pages on social networking sites;
- Being given details of all the sites and / or chat rooms their children visit;
- Checking their children’s online activity histories;
- Talking to them about the potential risks, using a ‘common sense’ approach in the same way as they talk with their children about dangers and risks in the real world;
- Setting boundaries and guidelines for internet usage and then trusting their children to abide by those guidelines;
- Encouraging their children to come and talk with them if they ever find themselves in a potential risk situation;
- Speaking with other parents and teachers.

### **3.4 Information sources that parents are currently using to help keep their children safe online**

Across all the groups, the participating parents were aware of a range of online dangers as detailed in 4.2 above. It is important to note, however, that not all the parents were aware of all the potential risks and the process of participating in the groups highlighted to the parents that their awareness was not fully comprehensive.

Notwithstanding this, all the parents took the issue of online danger seriously and they each took a number of measures to keep their children safe as detailed in 4.3 above.

Interestingly, however, bearing in mind that the purpose of the research was to probe behind the Ofcom research findings - and more specifically, the DCSF suspicion that parents might be experiencing problems due to information overload and issues of trust - across all 10 groups, this research found that none of the parents had sought out information proactively from any ‘official’ or ‘specialised’ sources - either on or offline.

Indeed, they did not feel there was any necessity to do so - any more, they explained, than they would seek out specific information on issues such as predators targeting children in the real world.

Parents’ said their awareness and knowledge of the various online dangers was a result of media reports of specific incidents, of speaking with their own children and also of talking to other parents or teachers.

When the moderator teak probed to determine whether parents could envisage situations where they might wish to seek out information proactively, a number said that a potential ‘tipping point’ for proactive information sourcing would be if their own child was directly affected by a specific issue.

Interestingly, however, the great majority said that the internet was not a front of mind, ‘first port of call’ for information in respect of online dangers – even though all

participants did regard the internet as a ‘first port call’ for seeking information generally;

And it is also interesting that even those few participants whose children had been directly affected by an issue had not, before the research sessions, used the *internet* to look for relevant information or advice.

Whilst the above findings were consistent across all the 10 groups, it would not be appropriate to draw the conclusion that *no* parents seek out information online, as the research was qualitative and so not statistically significant

It is, however, appropriate in the light of the consistency of these findings and the number of groups undertaken, to conclude that currently, *most* parents are *most likely not* seeking such information in a proactive way (on or offline) and most probably feel they know both *what* they need to warn their children about and *how* to go about doing this.

### **3.5 The parent / child relationship is a key factor in keeping children safe**

The measures currently taken by parents to keep their children safe online are detailed in 4.3 above.

From this, it is clear that the participating parents put great emphasis on the strength of the relationships they have with their children and the ease, therefore, with which they are able to discuss subjects of this kind. Most also stressed that this strength of relationship would ensure they are able to detect the signs of ‘something not being right’.

In practice, however, it would not be unreasonable to assume that having certain conversations is not necessarily as straightforward as parents would want to suggest in a group discussion – and particularly so when dealing with teenage children.

This hypothesis appears to stand up, because when these findings were explored in more detail, many participants did suggest that having now been part of the group research they would perhaps be more inclined in the future to seek out information online – both in relation to issues about which they are not particularly well informed, (in order to give their children the broadest and soundest guidance) *and* to seek some informed help / guidance on how to approach and *discuss* these with their children.

Clearly, however, parents not involved in the research would have no such prompt to change their current behaviour.

### **3.6 Perceptions of the volume and quality of information currently available online**

Overall, parents were not ‘put off’ by the amount of information currently available online that deals with aspects of child online safety.

When undertaking their on-screen information-gathering tasks, it was only in relation to the Cyber-bullying task, that a significant majority said the level of results delivered were either ‘far too many’ or ‘too many’.

For all the other tasks, the single most popular rating given for the level of results delivered was ‘neither too many nor too few’. And, in the case of the Grooming task, a number of parents even said that the number of results delivered was ‘too few’.

In discussion, the overall sentiment was that whilst internet searches do seem to deliver a lot of results, by and large it is valuable to have a range of information to compare and contrast.

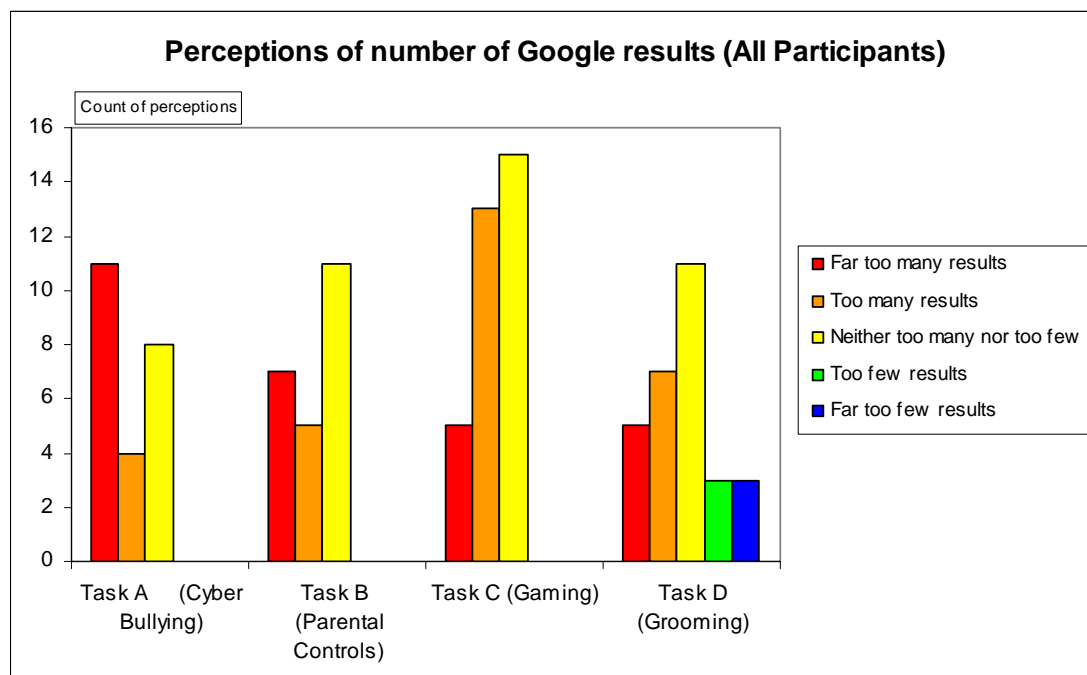
At the same time, for all tasks, more participants said they found 'exactly' or 'some of' what they were looking for than said they were unsure about the relevance or trustworthiness of the information; or than said they had difficulties comprehending jargon.

The numbers saying they found *no* relevant information were very low for all tasks and none said this in relation to the Cyber-bullying task.

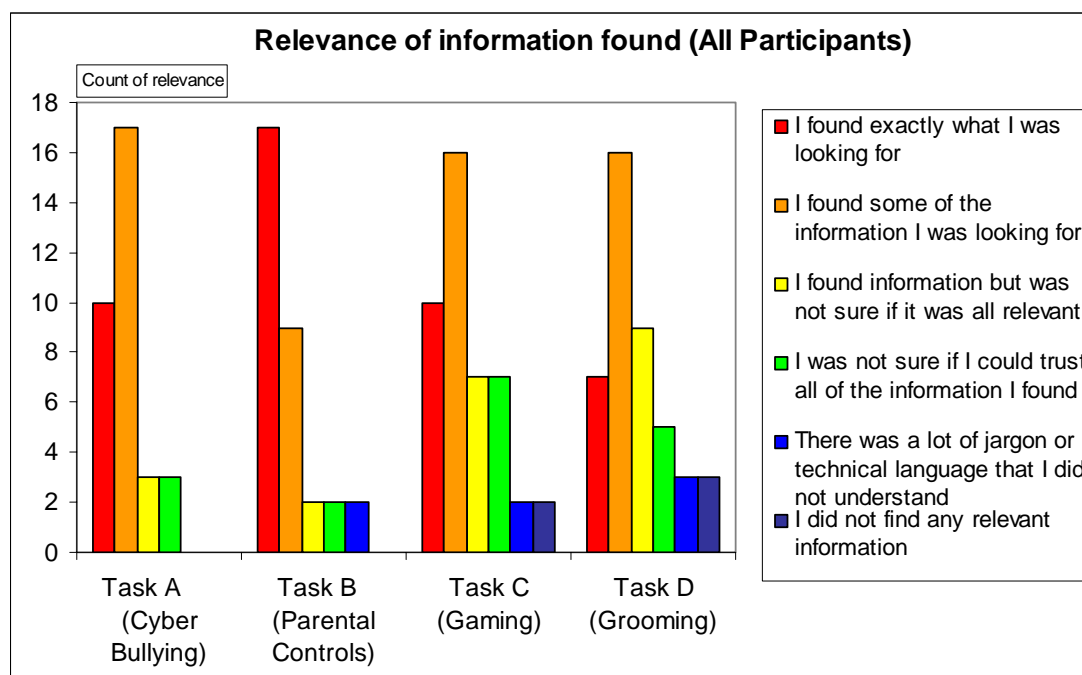
The two charts that follow show parents' reactions to the number and quality of the results they achieved when free-browsing for information in relation to each of the four tasks, as captured via questionnaire.

**NB:** the numbers of parents that answered each question reflected the total number of participants undertaking each of the four tasks – i.e. 23 for tasks A and B; 30 for tasks C and D. This in turn reflected some last minute cancellations due to unforeseen circumstances as noted earlier in this report. For certain questions, parents could select more than one answer – where this applies it has been indicated. When determining the relevance of the results they found, participants were asked to base this on how well the information addressed the questions they had in their own minds when presented with each scenario. This approach was taken to ensure the process of information-gathering was as close as possible to a real-life situation.

**What did you think of the number of search results provided by Google?  
(Select one answer on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = far too few and 5 = far too many)**



**Did you find information that answered your questions? (Select all answers that apply. Base your answers on the questions you had in your mind when presented with the task-specific scenario)**



### 3.7 Use of search engines

As detailed earlier, the participating parents confirmed that Google was the search engine they used most often, followed by Yahoo.

When deciding which of the results to click on the majority (36) indicated that they read the text under each result and decide from that. This was confirmed in discussion as well as via the questionnaire results – and this behaviour was also noted by the moderator team whilst observing the on-screen tasks.

About half this number (16) said they always click on the *first few* results on the page; and 12 said they always click on the *first* result on the page. Very few said they always click on the links shown on the right hand side of the page and only slightly more said they look at the web address.

NB: It should be noted that when completing their questionnaires, participants were asked to indicate all of the behaviours that applied to them when using Google, therefore multiple answers apply.

We believe it is encouraging that in selecting which information to access on topics of a serious nature, parents are taking the time to read the text when making their selections. And, as noted above, this was actual observed behaviour and not simply something participants chose to say in an open group.

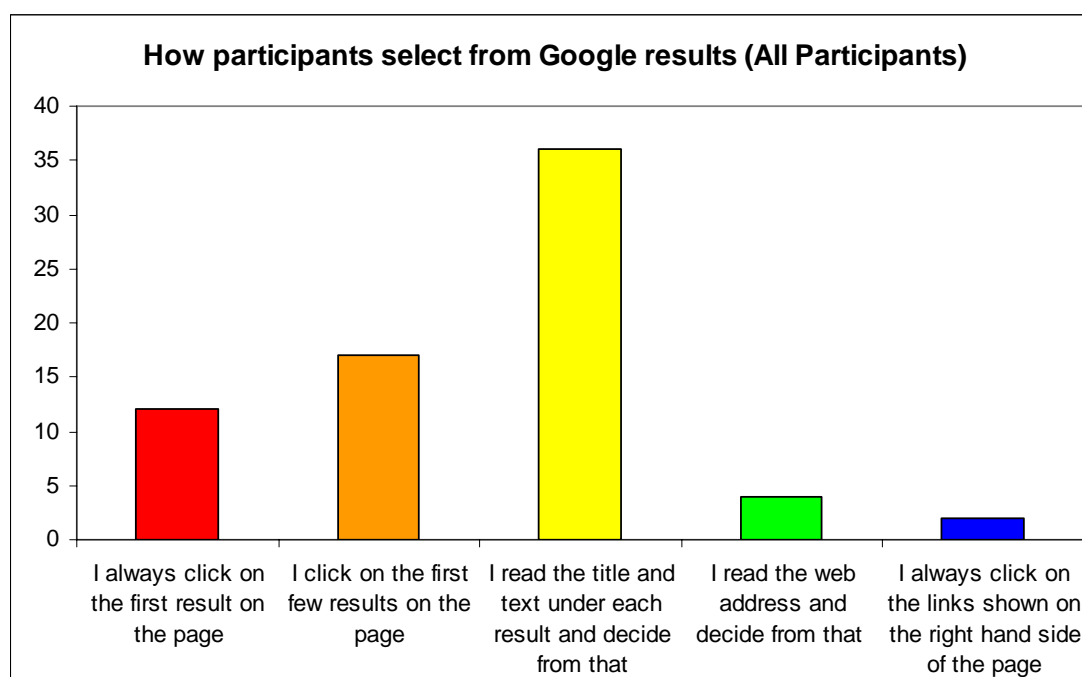
It is also interesting, however, that participants did not say they looked at the web address before making a selection, because the ‘owner’ of the site was found to play a key role in the issue of trust. More information relating to ‘trust’ is given under section 3.10.

A further interesting finding was the perception that some participants held of what is indicated by the yellow shaded background that sits behind the top results to emerge in a Google search (not least because a large number had indicated always clicking



on the first or the first few results). Some participants had no idea what the shading indicated, whilst other believed it indicated 'recommended' sites.

**How do you normally select which results to click on? (Select all answers that apply)**



### 3.8 Use of search terms

When free browsing for information in relation to each of the four tasks, participants recorded on their questionnaires the search terms they used.

Bearing in mind that most participants were happy with the relevance of information retrieved, it can be concluded that their search terms were effective. Indeed, in observing the free browsing activity, it was clear that many had sourced appropriate websites and for some tasks, a number of participants had found the sites that had been pre-selected for the next part of the on-screen activity.

Interestingly, however, few participants used any of the official terms for the particular threats they were investigating (e.g. cyber-bullying). This is not surprising, as participants were shown a list containing a number of such terms later in the discussion. This revealed that most official terms are, when seen for the first time, self-explanatory, but a number of participants then commented that some prior knowledge of these would probably have made their searches even more effective.

The following 'word clouds' illustrate the search terms used and the sites that were then clicked on and explored, for each of the four tasks. In the case of the search term clouds, the larger the word the more frequently it was used in a search. Clearly, when interpreting these, it is important not to attach too much importance to words that will have been common to all searches but which, in their own right, are not task specific (e.g. children, danger). For the websites visited clouds, the larger the name of the site, the greater the number of participants saying they visited the site.

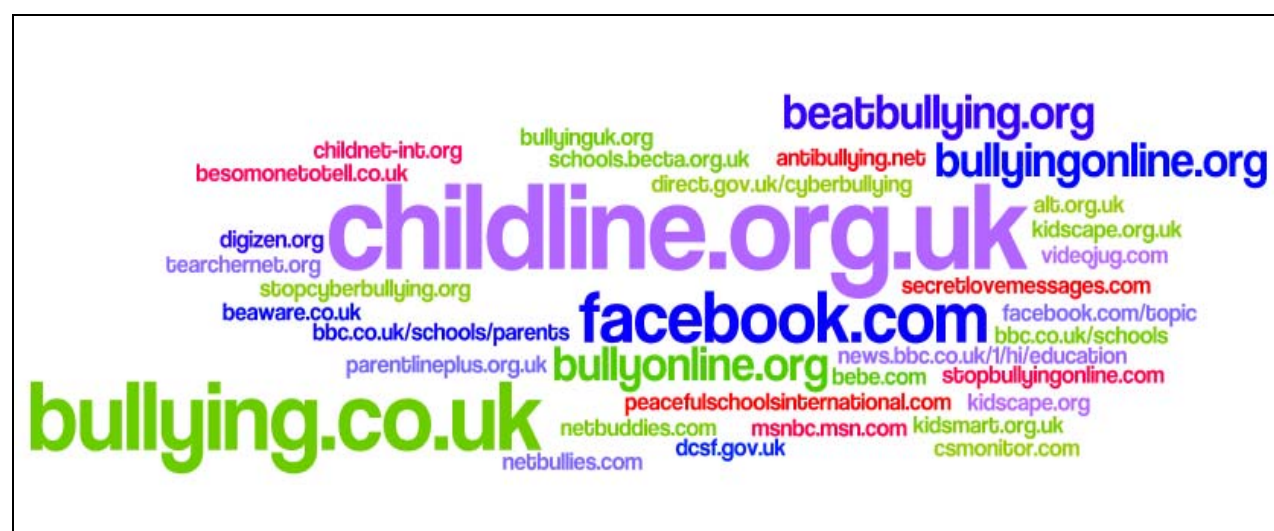
## TASK A – CYBER-BULLYING

### Search terms used



More participants used the term 'bullying' than the more accurate term 'cyber-bullying'. It is also interesting to see 'Facebook' emerging as a frequently used term, reinforcing the finding that parents perceive social networking sites as a potential source of this danger to their children.

### Websites visited during free-browsing



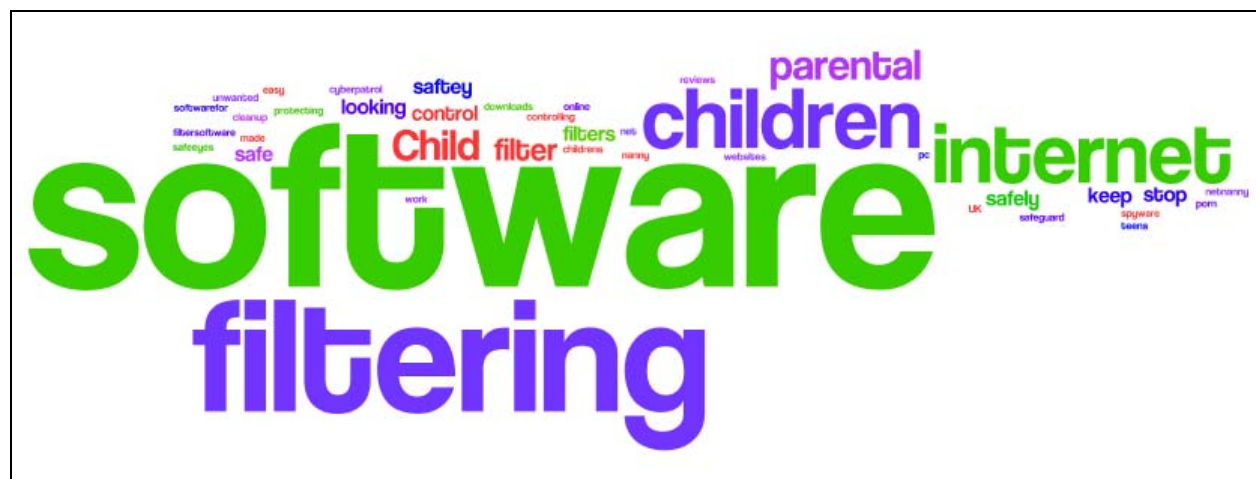
As will be seen later, well-known organisations such as charities are amongst the most trusted for information relating to online child safety. This is reflected in the high incidence of participants visiting the Childline website.

It is also interesting to note the prominence of Facebook. Not only did parents perceive social networking sites as potential environments within which bullying could take place, they also felt that site owners should provide information on the possible dangers that can arise from misuse of their sites and the above cloud indicates that participants visited Facebook to see what it might tell them about online bullying.

Although few participants said they read URLs specifically to help them to decide which sites to select during a search, the number of sites accessed with 'dot.org' URLs is interesting and fits with the findings on trust that are covered in more detail later. No doubt, reading the text provided by Google gave parents sufficient confidence to select these sites.

## TASK B – PARENTAL CONTROLS

### Search terms used



Use of the term software should not be given too much importance as it will have been used in conjunction with other words when searching.

### Websites visited during free-browsing



Netnanny.com was far and away the most frequently visited site during this task, followed by Cyberpatrol.com. A number of participants also visited the site that had been pre selected for the next part of the task (internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com) which is shown mid-way down on the right hand side of the cloud.





## TASK D - GROOMING

### Search terms used



This cloud seems to indicate that this task was the most difficult for parents in determining what words to use to deliver an effective search. If one ignores the words that would have been used frequently in conjunction with others – such as children, online, internet and safety – ‘predators’ has emerged as having been used a little more often than others, along with ‘adults’ which is less likely to deliver an effective result unless used alongside other more specific words. The official term ‘grooming’ was not used in many instances.

### Websites used during free browsing



The disparate range of search terms used for this task is reflected in the wide range of sites visited. The most frequently visited site was Microsoft.com/protect – a finding

that is not surprising as it reflects the comments made in relation to ‘trust’ and which are detailed later in this report. The CEOP (Child Online Protection and Exploitation) Centre site also proved popular – providing another finding that reflected participants’ views on the subject of trust and government as an information source for child online safety.

### 3.9 Reactions to pre-selected websites

Reactions to the four pre-selected sites as recorded in the questionnaires are interesting as these ratings helped support the broader discussion surrounding website ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ when seeking serious information of this kind.

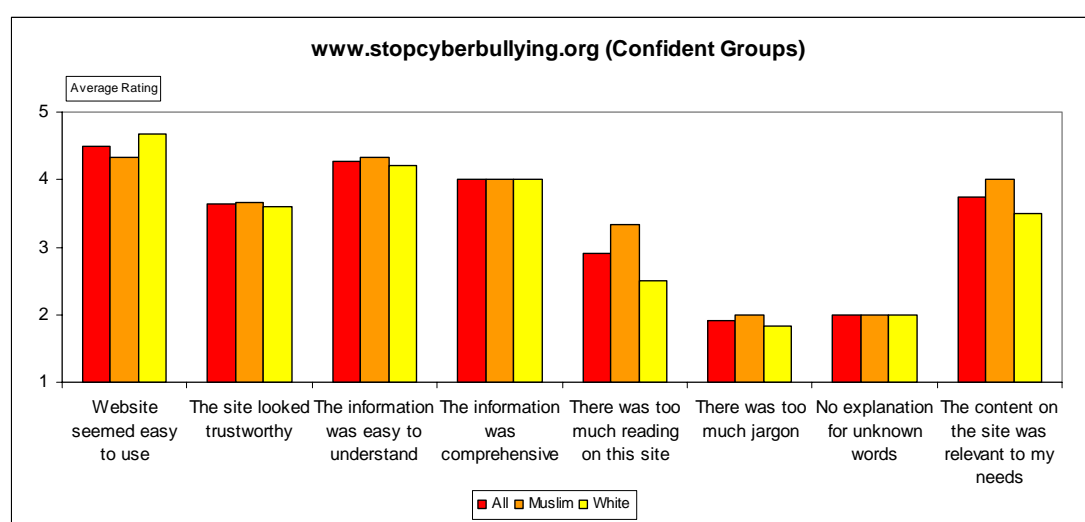
Each participant was presented with a series of statements relating to each website and was asked to agree or disagree with these on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = disagree strongly and 5 = agree strongly.

The following charts show the results broken out by the ‘Confident’ and ‘Less Confident’ segments and, within those, by ethnic group, with the scores shown being based on the *average* rating given by each participant segment to each statement.

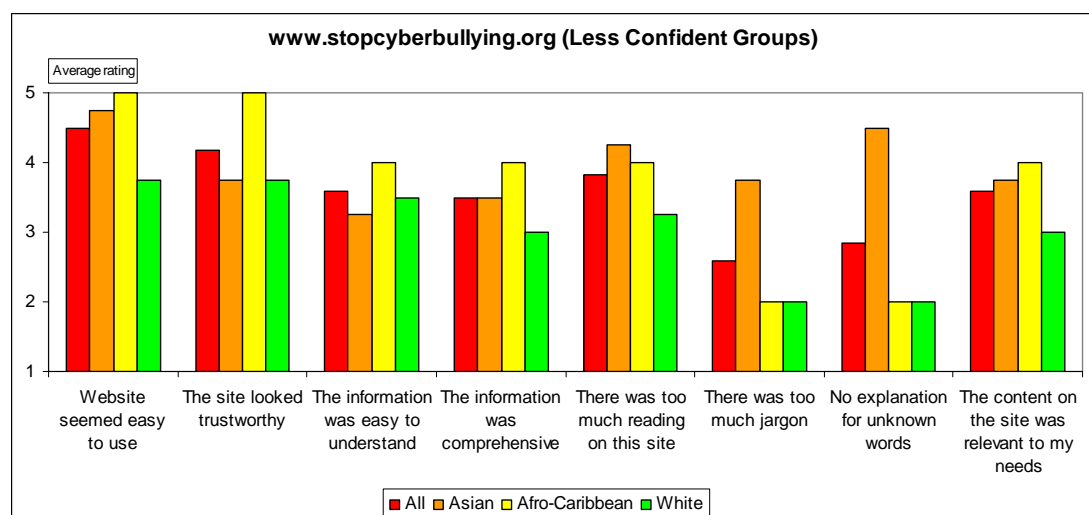
**NB:** It must be noted that the sample sizes for each segment were not identical. In addition, all the segments were too small to deliver *statistically significant* data. However, the variances shown in the charts do highlight opinions that may be prevalent in the respective groups on a national basis – but statistically significant quantitative research would be required to confirm this.

Finally, as stated above, the real value of having asked participating parents to look around the pre-selected site and then score them, was that this helped focus their thoughts on the aspects of websites that they find helpful / unhelpful, trustworthy and so on. The actual and relative scores for each site are far less important, but some commentary on these is provided.

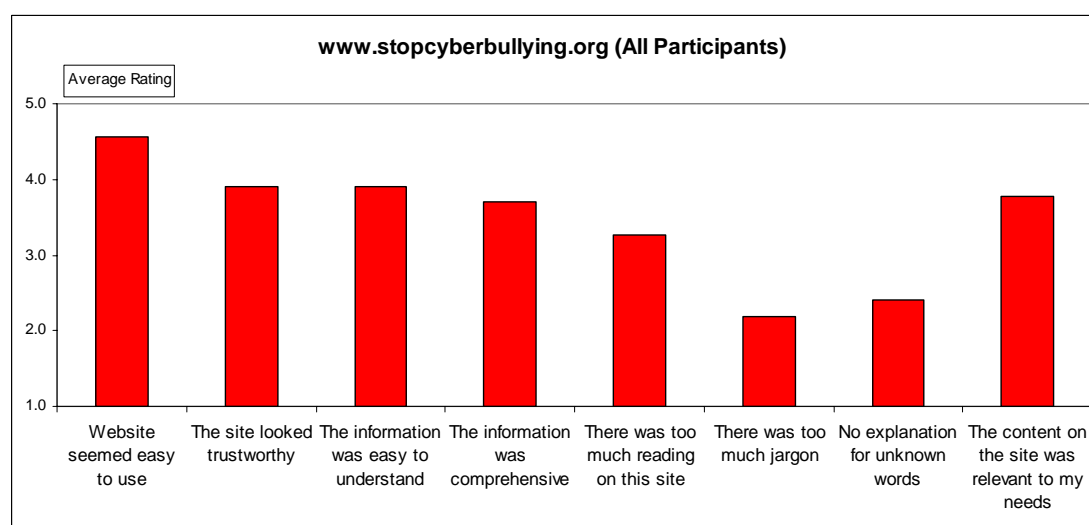
#### Task A – Cyber-bullying: [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)



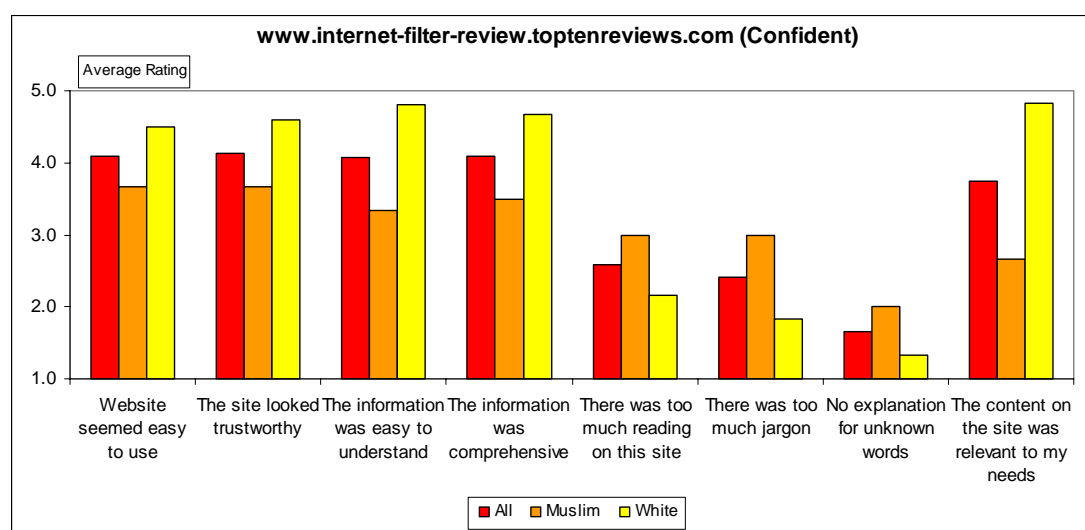
Amongst the Confident groups, there was very little variance in the ratings given to this website by the different ethnic groups, although Muslim parents felt a little more strongly than Caucasian parents that the site required ‘too much reading’.



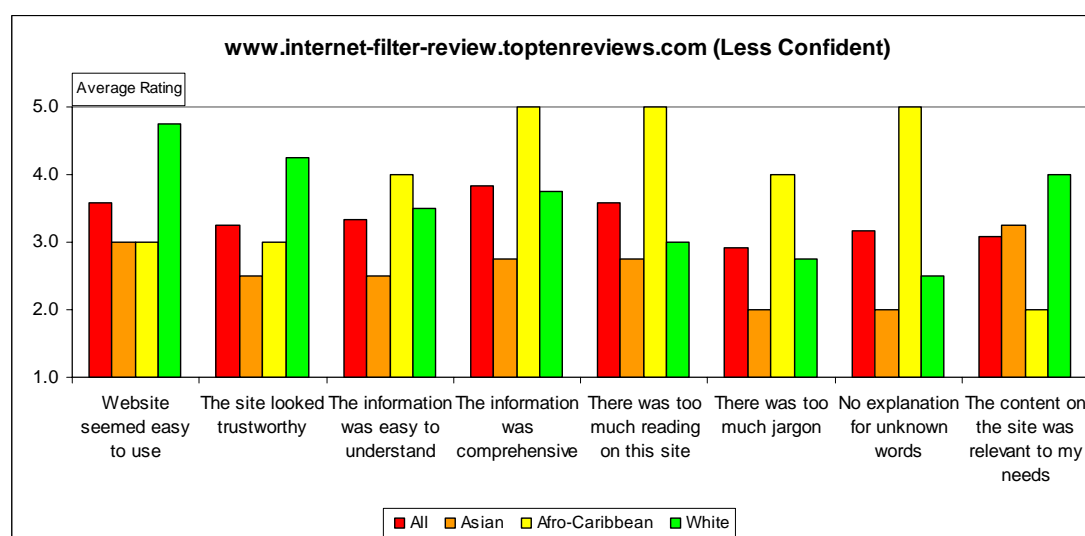
Amongst the Less Confident groups, however, some reactions to this website were more marked by ethnic group and are worthy of note. Specifically, Asian parents felt more strongly than others that the site used too much jargon and failed to provide explanations for unknown words or terms. This was supported by discussion with Asian parents from the Less Confident group who were particularly keen to stress their preference for British websites as opposed to those provided out of the USA on the grounds both of the language used and references to the law – which they felt might not apply in the UK. Stopcyberbullying.org is indeed an American website provided by Parry Aftab, a US lawyer specialising in security and cyberspace issues and child advocacy.



The above chart shows the average ratings given by all participants who undertook the Cyber-bullying information gathering task and so visited this website. *Overall*, the perception of their being too much jargon and little explanation for this was not high.

**Task B – Parental Controls:** [www.internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com](http://www.internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com)

Among the Confident parents reviewing this website, the Muslim participants gave the least favourable ratings and had quite markedly different views to the Caucasian parents in terms of the site's content being relevant to their needs. Caucasian parents scored the site favourably on that point with the Muslim parents scoring far lower.

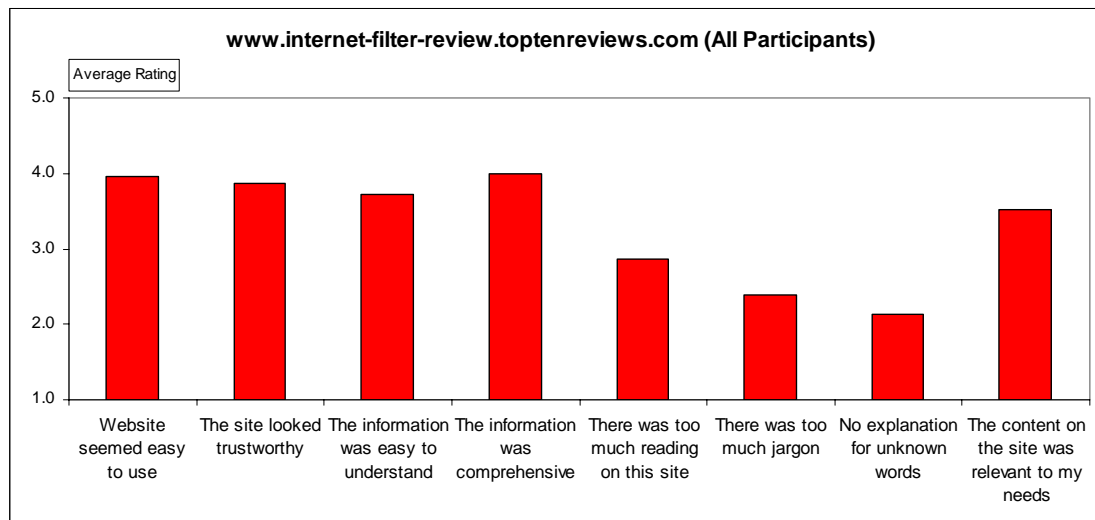


On this occasion, Less Confident Afro-Caribbean parents were the most critical of the use of jargon and lack of explanations for this – though they also said the information was comprehensive and the average score from Afro-Caribbean parents on 'easy to understand' was higher than those given by the Asian and Caucasian Less Confident participants. Afro-Caribbean parents also felt quite strongly that the content was not really relevant to their needs.

On a site dedicated to information about different software, this use of language criticism is not altogether surprising, but interestingly, the same Less Confident Asian parents who had found jargon a problem on the stopcyberbullying.org, did not appear to have a similar problem with this site. They did, however, give the site low ratings for ease of understanding, the comprehensiveness of content and the amount of reading required.

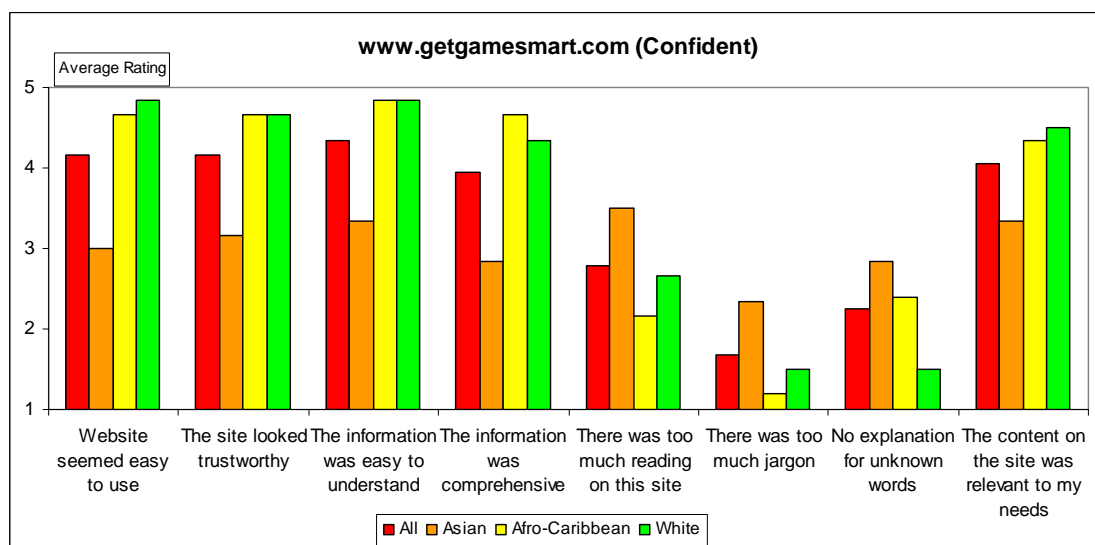


**NB:** In both the Confident and Less Confident groups, the ethnic minority parents were less convinced than Caucasian parents that the site looked trustworthy.

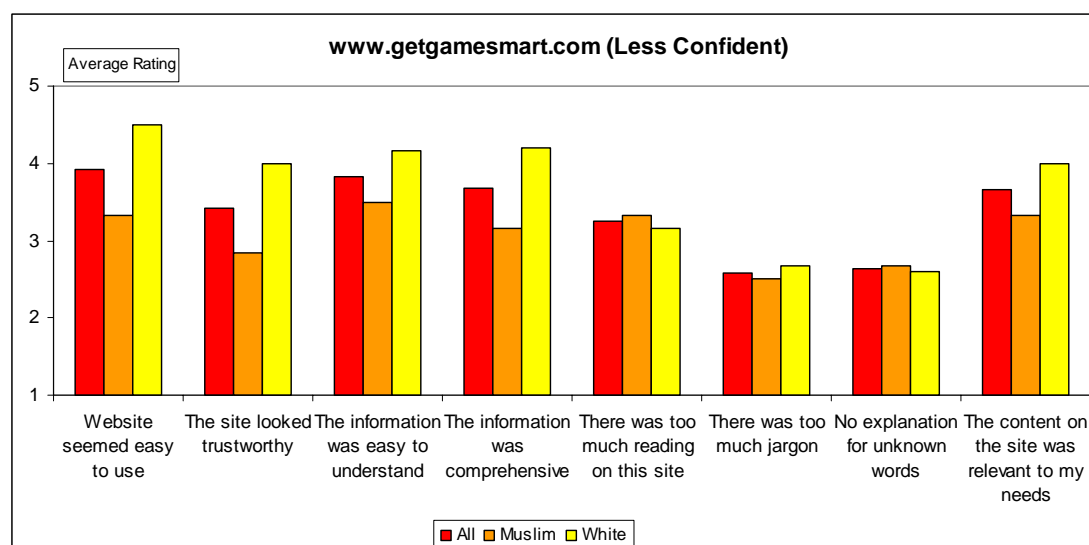


The above chart shows the average ratings given by all participants who undertook the Parental Controls information gathering task and so visited this website.

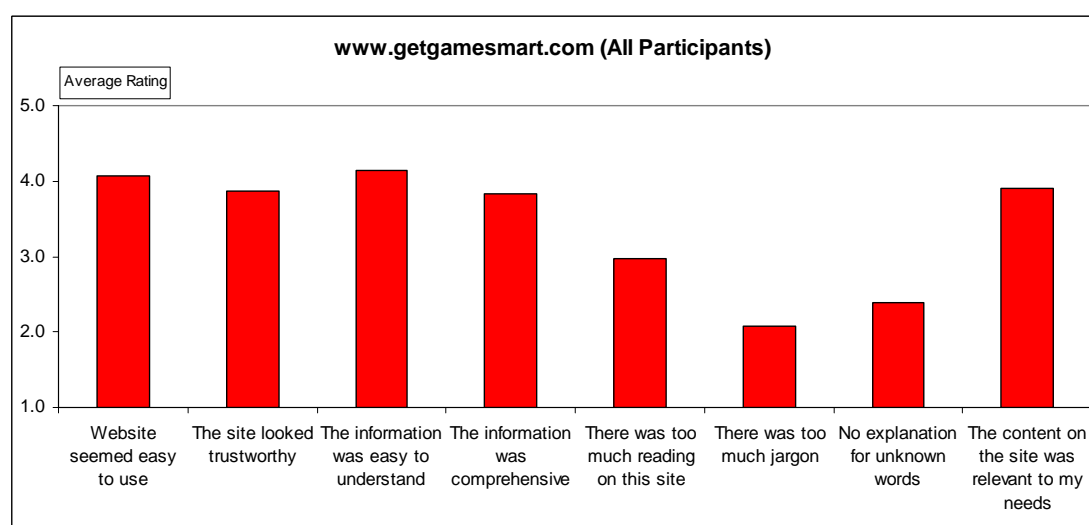
#### Task C – Gaming: [www.getgamesmart.com](http://www.getgamesmart.com)



Confident Asian participants gave far less favourable ratings to this site than those from the other ethnic groups.



Less Confident parents gave ratings that were more in alignment with each other, across the ethnic groupings than did the Confident parents. The Less Confident parents were more critical in their ratings on the subjects of jargon and lack of explanations for unknown words, than were the Confident parents who used the same site. Caucasian parents gave markedly higher 'trustworthy' ratings than those given by Muslim parents.



The above chart shows the average scores given by all participants who undertook the gaming task and visited the [www.getgamesmart.com](http://www.getgamesmart.com) website.

#### Task D – Grooming: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

The overall reaction to the Directgov website was more positive than for any other visited and the key reason given by each relevant group in discussion was that it is a government website.

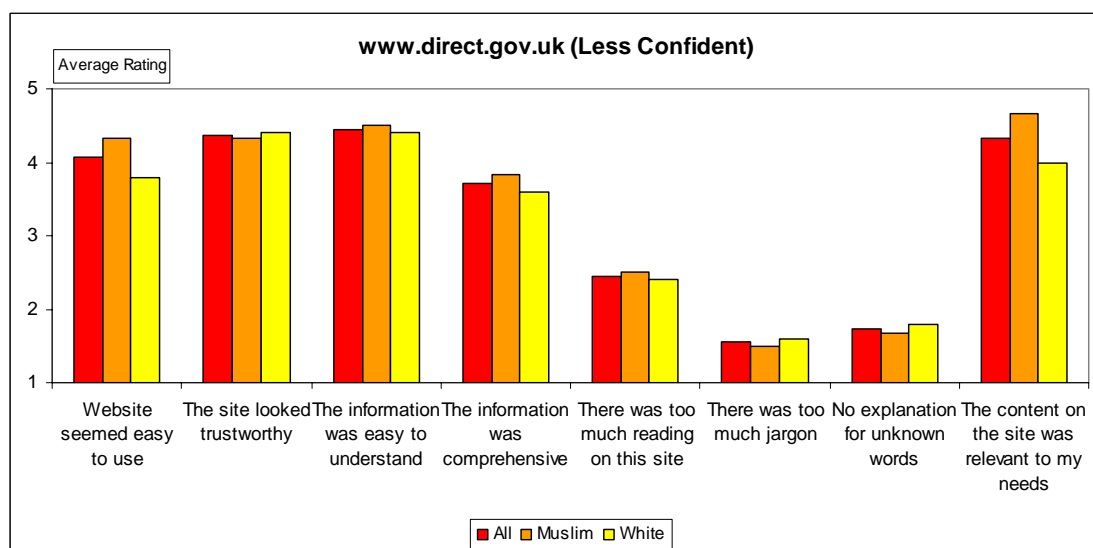
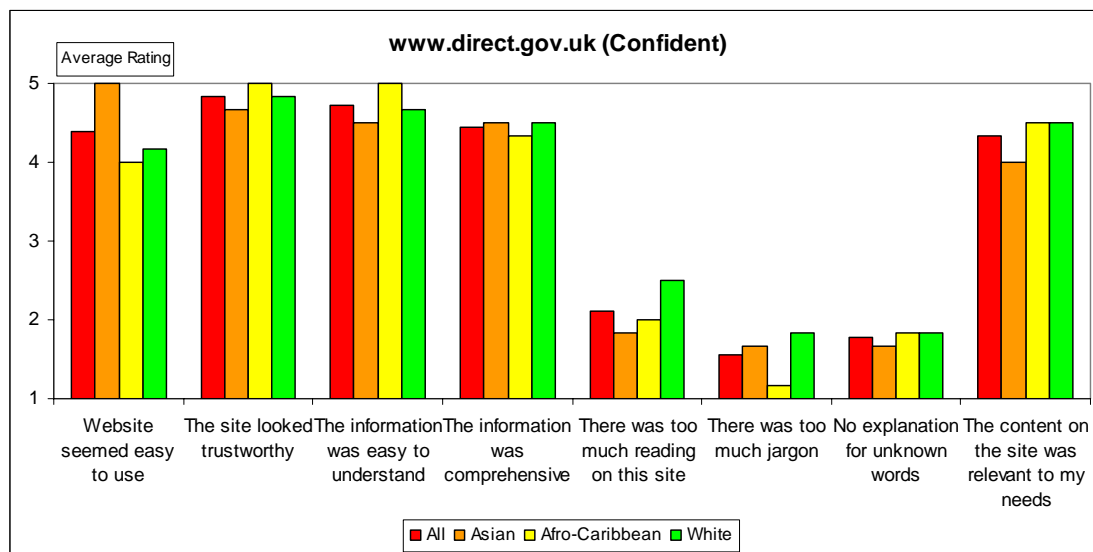
Indeed, all groups – including those who were not specifically directed to Directgov – confirmed that, for information of this kind, government is a highly trustworthy source.

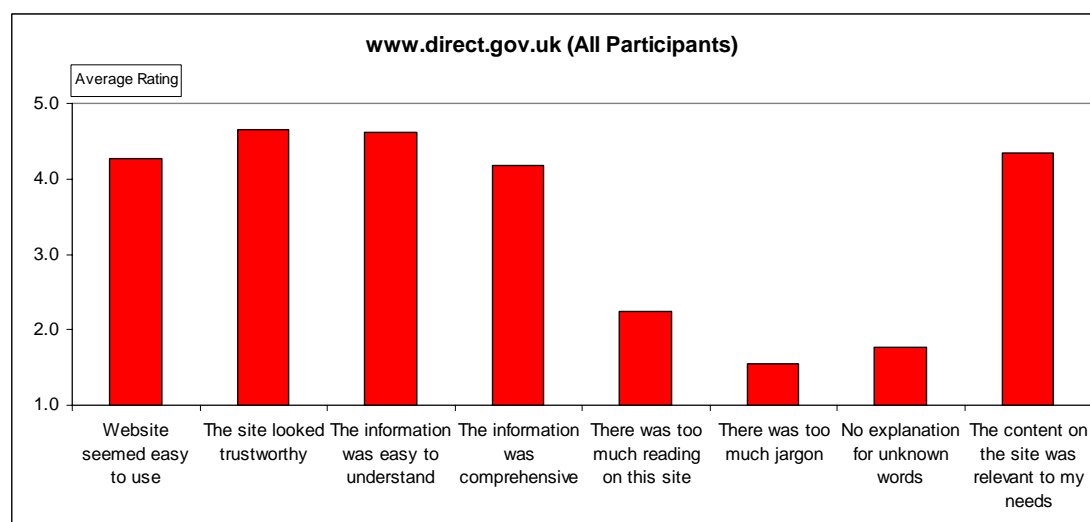
Other favourable comments made about Directgov in discussion were that it was a 'no frills, no nonsense' site, that presented information clearly and concisely, in every day language and this is reflected in the charts below.

Though not directly pertinent to this piece of research, it is interesting to note that only those participants who used the in-site search function and who knew the term grooming found their way quickly to the relevant information. Those who attempted to find the information via menu navigation only were unsuccessful and required assistance from the moderator team.

Accordingly, despite the good ratings shown below in terms of 'website seemed easy to use', site navigation was not straightforward for this topic. Specialist usability research carried out previously by RE-OW on the Direct.gov site has uncovered similar navigational problems.

Some participants also found their way to the CEOP website and those who did once again gave favourable comments based on the site being trustworthy.





### 3.10 The issue of trust

As highlighted above, Directgov emerged as a highly trustworthy website for information relating to child online safety because it is a government site.

The issue of trust was a theme explored in detail in all groups and each time, government emerged as the most trusted source for information of this kind.

Other site owners who would be well-trusted as providers of such information were identified as:

- Well-respected and successful brand names such as Microsoft who participants felt had no reason to provide anything other than honest and factual information. NB: Microsoft was the most frequently mentioned commercial name in this context.
- Charities / non-governmental organisations with the most frequently mentioned names being Childline and the BBC.

### 3.11 Suggestions for a public awareness campaign from government

As highlighted, the on-screen exercises and discussion served to make the participating parents realise they were not necessarily fully informed of all the potential dangers facing their children on the internet.

In addition, some parents came to feel that seeking information or help proactively only when their child has experienced an incident, might be leaving things too late.

Against this background two groups, spontaneously and enthusiastically suggested that the government should launch a public awareness campaign that would elevate the issue of child internet safety in the national consciousness. As examples, they cited campaigns they remember that had highlighted the dangers posed by alcohol abuse, drink driving and unprotected sex.

Specifically, the following was proposed:

- A television advertising campaign with some films targeted at parents and some specially designed to educate children. The messages should not only highlight the dangers but also drive parents and children towards specific information sources both on and offline;

- The use of soap opera storylines to highlight the dangers – again seeking to target both parents and children through the choice of programmes (Hollyoaks was cited as the best soap opera to reach children).

It should be noted in this connection that most participants were not in favour of leafleting campaigns, saying they rarely read such materials when these come through their letter boxes.

*“{The government should} provide information for children on television. The government can bring information together on swine flu in 48 hours but nothing for kids’ online safety. They could do this during kids’ programmes.”*

Caucasian Parent, Group 7, Confident

### **3.12 Website likes and dislikes when seeking information related to online child safety**



If - based on the findings of this research, other relevant data and considerations such as those highlighted in the Executive Summary – DCSF proceeds with the development of a new online one-stop-shop for child internet safety, then it should seek to address the following target audience requirements / preferences (see list below).

It should be noted, however, that the following list is by no means an exhaustive list as the research undertaken was not user needs research. Accordingly, we would recommend that comprehensive user needs research is undertaken to inform any future development and, to ensure the new resource delivers an optimal user experience, that iterative usability testing is undertaken during the build stage.

- Mindful that government websites are the most trusted for information of this kind, it should be very clear that the new resource has been provided by government; and this should be evident wherever the user might arrive in the site (i.e. allowing for arrival at deep levels via search engines).
- Search engine optimisation should be undertaken with the objective of being the first result delivered by Google and other popular engines.
- Content should be presented in a simple straightforward style, with attractive but not ‘over-designed’ pages and with good use of white space. Heavily designed sites and especially those that use ‘flash’ technology suggested ‘commercial’ sites to the research participants.
- Language should be plain English with minimal use of jargon and a glossary or ‘tool tip’ facility should be provided to explain any unusual terms or acronyms.
- The ‘official terms’ used for the different online threats should be provided in a full list and with guidance on using these to improve results when using search engines.
- Advice should be given on how to deal with the various threats facing children online – including guidance on how to raise and discuss more sensitive issues with.
- Guidelines should be given for the amount of time children should be allowed to spend online – generally and in relation to specific activities such as gaming.

- Where applicable, details should be provided of the law relating to online crimes (e.g. Grooming) with information on how to report suspected crimes, how to initiate a legal process and the associated penalties for offenders.
- Comprehensive information should be provided on filtering software should be provided and, ideally, some form of recommendation should be made – either on specific products or at the very least, the types of products and features parents should seek.
- Links to other, possibly more specialised, sites (e.g. sites that deal exclusively with a specific issue) should be included on the site.

## 4. APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

  
usability & accessibility specialists

Child Online Safety

Insert group code / AB

**Introduction**

Thank you for taking part in this research study. You will take the role of someone seeking information to help ensure that children are safe while using the internet. You will undertake several tasks and then complete a few short questions. Finally, the session will be concluded with a short group discussion on your experience of the tasks and some broader discussions.

You have been recruited to meet some specific criteria. Firstly we would just like to check a few details about you.

**About yourself**

Name

Please tick the boxes describing you:

Age

25-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56+ ☐

Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

Ethnic/Cultural background

(If you are Muslim tick only the Muslim box, irrespective of ethnic origin)

White ☐ Asian ☐ Afro-Caribbean ☐ Afro-Caribbean Mixed race ☐

Muslim ☐

Other:

How often do you use the internet at home or work?

Everyday ☐ 3 to 4 times a week ☐ Twice a week ☐ Once a week or less ☐

What search engine do you most often use?

Google ☐ Yahoo! ☐ MSN ☐ Ask.com ☐

Other:

CONFIDENTIAL

RedEye optimum.web

**About your child / children**

What is the gender and age of your child/children? (Please place a cross in the appropriate box)

	Male	Female	Under 7	7 - 11	12 - 16	Over 16
Child 1						
Child 2						
Child 3						
Child 4						

How often do your child / children access the internet at home?

Everyday ☐    3 to 4 times a week ☐    Twice a week ☐    Once a week or less ☐

**Please do not turn over until you are asked to do so**

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**T1. Free search (A)**Scenario

You have read an article in the news paper saying that there has been a large increase in the number of children being harassed or bullied via email, via social networking websites such as Facebook and Bebo and also via text messages. You want to find out more about this so that you are well informed and able to identify this if it were happening to your child. Use the internet to find more information.

Click on the shortcut to Google, and use Google to see if you can find some helpful information.

Please answer the following questions as you use the internet:

1. What words/phrases did you type into Google?

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2. How do you normally select what results to click on? (Tick as many as apply)

- ☐ I always click on the first result on the page
- ☐ I click on the first few results on the page
- ☐ I read the title and text under each result and decide from that
- ☐ I read the web address and decide from that
- ☐ I click on the results in the yellow box why? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I always click on the links shown on the right hand side of the page
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What did you think about the number of search results provided by Google?

(Please rate on the 1-5 Scale below by circling the number that best reflects your opinion)

Too many results	5	4	3	2	1	Too few results
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Continue to next page

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4. What website/s did you look at? (Write down the web address e.g. www.site.co.uk or the name of the site)

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5. Did you find information that answered your questions? (Tick as many as apply)

- ☐ I found exactly what I was looking for
- ☐ I found some of the information I was looking for
- ☐ I found information but was not sure if it was all relevant
- ☐ I was not sure if I could trust all of the information I found
- ☐ There was a lot of jargon or technical language that I did not understand
- ☐ I did not find any relevant information

Please write any thoughts or comments you have about the sites you have visited in the space below.

**Please do not turn over until you are asked to do so**

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**T2. Specific Site (A)**

Now please spend a few minutes having a look at the following website and answer the questions below regarding this site.

[www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)

*Please circle one of the five scores (1 to 5) in the boxes available, depending on how much you agree/disagree with the statement. 5 means that you agree strongly and 1 means you disagree strongly.*

1. This website seemed easy to use

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

2. The site looked trustworthy

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

3. The information was easy to understand

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

4. The information was comprehensive

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

5. There was too much reading to do on this site

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

6. There was too much jargon or too many technical terms I did not understand

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

7. It was difficult to find an explanation for unknown words or phrases on the website

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

8. I felt the content on this site was relevant to my needs

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

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Please write any thoughts or comments you have about the site you have visited in the space below.

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**Please do not turn over until you are asked to do so**

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### T3. Free search (B)

#### Scenario

Following a recommendation from a friend, you decide to control access to certain types of content on your child's computer. Though your friend has recommended the use of "filtering software" for this purpose, he has not specified which brand of software to use and has not recommended any specific features/capabilities that the software should have. Use the internet to find information on an appropriate software package.

Click on the shortcut to Google, and use Google to see if you can find some helpful information.

*Please answer the following questions as you use the internet:*

1. What words/phrases did you type into Google?

---



---



---



---

2. How do you normally select what results to click on? (Tick as many as apply)

- ☐ I always click on the first result on the page
- ☐ I click on the first few results on the page
- ☐ I read the title and text under each result and decide from that
- ☐ I read the web address and decide from that
- ☐ I click on the results in the yellow box why? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I always click on the links shown on the right hand side of the page
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What did you think about the number of search results provided by Google?

(Please rate on the 1-5 Scale below by circling the number that best reflects your opinion)

Too many results	5	4	3	2	1	Too few results
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

Continue to next page

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4. What website/s did you look at? (Write down the web address e.g. www.site.co.uk or the name of the site)

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5. Did you find information that answered your questions? (Tick as many as apply)

- ☐ I found exactly what I was looking for
- ☐ I found some of the information I was looking for
- ☐ I found information but was not sure if it was all relevant
- ☐ I was not sure if I could trust all of the information I found
- ☐ There was a lot of jargon or technical language that I did not understand
- ☐ I did not find any relevant information

Please write any thoughts or comments you have about the sites you have visited in the space below.

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**Please do not turn over until you are asked to do so**

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**T2. Specific Site (B)**

Now please spend a few minutes having a look at the following website and answer the questions below regarding this site.

[www.internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com](http://www.internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com)

Please circle one of the five scores (1 to 5) in the boxes available, depending on how much you agree/disagree with the statement. 5 means that you agree strongly and 1 means you disagree strongly.

9. This website seemed easy to use

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

10. The site looked trustworthy

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

11. The information was easy to understand

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

12. The information was comprehensive

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

13. There was too much reading to do on this site

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

14. There was too much jargon or technical terms I did not understand

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

15. It was difficult to find an explanation for unknown words or phrases on the website

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

16. I felt the content on this site was relevant to my needs

agree	5	4	3	2	1	disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Continue to next page

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Please write any thoughts or comments you have about the site you have visited in the space below.



Thank you

Your participation today has been very helpful and will contribute greatly to improving the site for the future. Please wait for the moderator to give you further instructions

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## 5. APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION GUIDE



### DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### NB:

- The notes that follow are intended as a guide only, to ensure key issues and areas of questioning are covered.
- They have not been designed for use as a rigid script. Deliberately, the notes are designed to be fluid, thereby allowing the moderator to explore and probe any additional areas of relevance and interest that are introduced by the session participants.

#### STAGE A

##### Introduction (session objectives)

- Lead moderator thanks participants for attending and introduces self and support moderator.
- Explains recording /viewing / confidentiality principles.
- Today we will be discussing the subject of keeping children safe when they are using the Internet.
- We will be looking at how you, as parents, go about finding information yourselves, on the Internet, to help you in your efforts to keep your children safe online.
- In the process, we want to find out as much as we can about the things you are most concerned about, and we want to know about any difficulties or problems you encounter when looking for this kind of information.
- The results of the research will be used to determine what else might need to be done or made available to help parents who want to keep their children safe, whilst still allowing them to benefit from the many positive aspects of the online world.
  - NB: DCSF/government should not, at this stage, be revealed as the sponsor of the research as this may influence participants' responses to questions about trustworthy information sources.
  - Participants should be advised of the research sponsor towards the end of the session after 'trust' and perceptions of government have been discussed.
- Groups have been arranged to reflect particular ethnic / cultural backgrounds as we are interested to know whether these factors might influence your attitudes and concerns on this subject.
- We are also keen to explore whether your gender, your age, the age and gender of your children, etc. may influence your attitudes and concerns.
  - Moderator probes briefly to confirm all participants are of the relevant ethnic / cultural grouping.

- You will be doing some information gathering tasks using an individual computer screen, you will provide some information on a questionnaire, and then there will be a group discussion.
- The moderator will explain everything as we go along.
- You can't do or say anything wrong all your views and feedback are valuable.

#### Profiling data sheet completion

- Moderator explains role of questionnaire and the 'please do not turn over until asked' protocol.
- Participants asked to complete profiling section of questionnaire only.

#### Experience of relevant issues / sourcing information – brief orientation before undertaking screen-based tasks

- Are you concerned about the safety of your children when they are using the Internet?
- Are your concerns based on particular experiences that your children have had or are they just general, precautionary concerns of your own?
- Have you ever tried to find information to help you deal with those concerns?
- Did you use the Internet yourself to try and find information to help you?
- Today we are going to look at some of these issues and how easy or not it might be for parents to find helpful information.
- In a short while we'll discuss all of this in detail.
- First, we will start by attempting some information gathering using the computers.

#### STAGE B: on-line information gathering

- Participants are directed to pick up their questionnaire packs and the moderator team talks them through the first task (and then subsequently through the remaining tasks)
- During the tasks, the moderator team observes the participants and notes any particular difficulties encountered.
- Participants provide their reactions and opinions to what they have done / found by completing the relevant pages of the questionnaire pack as they progress through the tasks. This will be explored further in the Stage C discussion.

STAGE C: group discussion

## Move to relaxed seating area



- Moderator asks participants to move to the comfortable seating area
  - Bring questionnaires / notes with them.
  - Take natural break at this point / replenish refreshments if required.

## Participant introductions

- Moderator asks each participant to introduce themselves briefly to other members of the group covering:
  - Name
  - Number of children
  - Gender and age of children
  - How long he / she (the parent) has been using the Internet
  - How often the children use the Internet at home

## Overall attitudes to child internet safety / issues of key concern

- You have been looking for information relating to two issues that many parents are concerned about, these were:
  - Children being bullied using electronic media; and
  - The use of filtering software to restrict the places your children can visit online.

Or

- The potential impact of computer games on children's behaviour; and
- Children exchanging emails with adult.
- First of all, I'd like to know whether these are genuinely issues that concern you in relation to your children?
- And before we discuss those and what you did online in more detail, are there any other issues of child safety on line that particularly concern you?
- Which are the ones that concern you most or least and why?

*(NB: moderator to encourage the group to identify the issues of concern, but prompts – as below – will be used with sensitivity if the group struggles to identify issues over and above those that were the subject of their on-screen tasks.)*

- Bullying or harassment via electronic media, such as email, texts or social networking sites
- The potential impact of computer games on children's behaviour
- Children exchanging emails with adults not known to them or their families
- The use of filtering software to restrict the places children can visit online
- Children finding inappropriate / offensive adult material (e.g. pornography)
- Children finding inappropriate material relating to the use of drugs

- Children finding material that seeks to encourage anti-social or extremist behaviour by suggesting this has legitimate foundations
- The exposure of children to undue advertising pressure
- The provision, by children, of too much personal information on social networking sites
- Ability of children to make judgments about who they communicate with
- Does this vary according to the age or gender of your children and if so why?
- Do you imagine your concerns will change in the future and if so why?  
(Prompting / probing only as necessary:
  - e.g. is that because you see the online world becoming too complex / sophisticated and you may not understand all that goes on?
  - e.g. is that because you see different dangers facing your children as they mature)
- How confident do you feel in your own knowledge of computers and the Internet?
- If you are not overly confident - does this worry you in terms of your ability to keep your children safe online?
- Do you feel that you are able to keep up-to-date with the different threats that your children could face online?
- How do you do that?
- Is there anything that would help you to do this?

#### Safety measures currently taken

- Do you currently take any particular measures to keep your children safe when they are online and if so what are they?  
(Prompting / probing only as necessary:
  - e.g. do you limit the time they are allowed online?
  - e.g. do you use parental controls software?
  - e.g. do you monitor their online activity in any way?)

#### The types of information parents are seeking and the sources they use

- We've talked about some of the things you are concerned about – have you actually had to deal with any of these - or they just issues of general concern?
- Do you look for information proactively – or do you look reactively when you think an issue may be directly affecting your child?
- What kind of information is it that you are generally looking for (or do you think you would be looking for)?  
(Prompting / probing only as necessary)
  - e.g. are you first of all looking for more explanation of exactly what the threat / problem is?
  - e.g. are you looking for guidance on how to spot whether your own child may be exposed to a threat of this kind?

- e.g. are you looking for help and guidance on how you might discuss these issues with your children?
- e.g. are you looking for technical / software solutions?
- e.g. do you expect there will be technical / software solutions to all potential threats, and if not, what other types of help would you be looking for?)
- How do you / would you decide where to go when you want information of this kind?
- What offline sources have you or would you use for this kind of information?
- Would your choice of information source vary according to the particular issue you are trying to find out about – and if so how?
- If you have actually found information yourself (i.e. before today) on any issue relating to keeping children safe on the Internet, which sources – on or offline – did you find most valuable and why?

On-screen exercises - relevance of results / clarity of results  
(Moderator to call up specific sites if relevant to illustrate points being made)

- Let's talk now about the experiences you just had looking for information online.
- Did you find the information you were looking for when you undertook your screen exercises?
- If not what was the problem?

(Prompting / probing only as necessary:

- e.g. was there insufficient information or too much?
- e.g. did you find conflicting information?
- e.g. were you unsure as to which pieces of information to trust?)
- The information you did find - was it easy to understand?  
(Prompting / probing only as necessary:
- e.g. was the language straightforward?
- e.g. did the information contain jargon or technical terms that were not explained?)
- What were the key problems with comprehension?
- When you are looking for information of this kind online, do you generally feel confident that you will understand it and be able to act on what you find?
- Was the information you found complete or did it leave questions unanswered?
- If the information was inadequate – what were the problems?
- If this had been a real life situation, do you feel you learnt enough about either of the issues you investigated to be able to take some positive action towards keeping your children safe?
- If not, why not?

- What would have helped?

#### How participants search the Internet

- You used Google to search for information relating to the scenarios we gave you – is this how you would go about looking for information if you were doing this in a real life situation?
- What search engines would you normally use?
- When you were undertaking your first task – what search terms did you use?

*Moderator to apply some of the terms provided by participants to deliver a search result on the big screen – if possible avoiding use of the official terms (e.g. cyber-bullying).*

- When you get a result like this how do you decide which links to follow?  
*(Prompting / probing only as necessary:*
  - e.g. do you always open the first link?
  - e.g. do you always open the first few links?
  - e.g. do you look at the web address to help you decide?
  - e.g. do you read the text given each time to help you decide?
- Do you find it difficult to decide which links to open?
- Do you find it helpful or unhelpful when a search delivers lots of results?
- Would you prefer to have fewer results?
- Ideally, what would you find most helpful when you do an Internet search for information of this kind?

#### Knowledge of official terms used to identify types of online danger

- Of the two issues you looked at, did you feel you got more valuable search results for one and if so which one?
- In relation to the tasks you were set – are any of you aware of these particular terms?
  - Cyber-bullying
  - Parental controls
- Or
  - Gaming
  - Grooming
- Did any of you use those terms for your searches?

- I
- Are you familiar with any of these other terms:
    - (Moderator to show a flip chart with a series of 'official terms' used for different child online safety related issues and note participants' understanding of them (e.g. electronic harassment, digital bullying, SMS bullying, internet predators, grooming))
  - What do you understand each one to mean?
  - Are there any terms here that you would be confused by?
  - Did you come across any of these terms when you were looking at information online?

### Trust

- When you are looking at online information and are visiting more than one website – how do you decide which information to trust?
- What types of organisations are you most inclined to trust and why?
- What types of organisations are you most inclined to have less trust in and why?
- What are your perceptions of government as a source of information on child Internet safety?
  - (Moderator to reveal at this juncture that the research has been commissioned by DCSF as they are keen to know what problems parents may be encountering when seeking out information online to help with child internet safety in order to determine ways in which this could be improved).

### Named sites visited

(Moderator to show sites where helpful on the large screen)

- When undertaking the screen-based tasks, we directed you to look at two specific sites – one for each of the scenarios you were considering. These were:
  - Cyber-bullying – stopbullying.com
  - Parental controls – internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com
- Or
  - Gaming – getgamesmart.com
  - Grooming – direct.gov.uk
- Which of those sites did you like best and why?
- Which of the sites gave the clearest information?
- Which of the sites did you not like and why?
- Had you ever visited any of these sites yourself before today?

- Would you be inclined to visit any of them again?

Sites found during free browsing  
(Moderator to show sites where helpful on the large screen)

- When undertaking the screen-based tasks, you visited a variety of sites that you found via your Google searches.
- Were there any sites you particularly liked and why?
- Were there any sites you particularly disliked and why?
- Had you ever visited any of these sites yourself before today?
- Would you be inclined to visit any of them again?

Sites already known to participants  
(Moderator to show sites where helpful on the large screen)

- Are there any sites that you have visited for information relating to child safety online in your own real-life situations that you particularly like?
- If so why do you like them and can you remember what they are?
- When you find a site you like, how do you ensure you will be able to find it again?  
(Prompting / probing only as necessary,
  - e.g. do you save it to your favourites?
  - e.g. do you make a note of the website address?
  - e.g. do you remember the name but still key that into a search engine?

New sources of online help?

- Is there anything that you would like to be able to find online that would help you in the future to address the issue of keeping your children safe online?
  - Moderator to probe all suggestions to ensure clarity is obtained on 'why' a particular suggestion would bring value.

Closing comments

- We have covered all the key areas.
- Is there anything you would like to add before we end the session?
- Thank you (and close).