

**FIND OUT MORE**

# Online concerns

**Nicky Fenwick** examines the research on some of the risks of young people going online.



**E**veryday, one third of all young teens (13-15) visit YouTube, and one quarter use Social Networking Sites. With 19% of students feeling safer in the cyber world than the real world, and 31% finding it easier to talk to someone online than in person, the time has come to question just how safe the internet is.

## Realistic assessment

Last year, the odds of becoming a cyber victim dropped from 1 in 4 to 1 in 6; although this decrease in risk is encouraging, it is still important to remember the odds are still high. Nearly half of all young people who use the internet are concerned about privacy, yet 22% have never received an internet safety talk.

Many adults are less informed and knowledgeable than the young people with whom they are working. When 51% of parents do not have or know if they have internet monitoring software on their computer and 95% could not identify common 'chat room language' warning of parents being present, it shows that there is still a need to educate young people, parents, and ourselves as practitioners about internet safety

## Potential risks

71% of teens (aged 13-17) reported receiving messages online from someone they didn't know, with 40% stating that they will usually reply and chat with that person. Shockingly, 30% considered meeting up with someone they met online, and even more worrying is the fact that 14% have followed through with a meeting.

To compound these statistics, it has been found that 1 in 4 young people (aged 10-17) have been exposed to sexually explicit pictures online without seeking or expecting them

**Nicky Fenwick is e-Participation Officer with UK Youth.**

**contact** ▶ Nicky Fenwick.  
**see** ▶ the Workforce section for more on internet safety.

NETWORK UPDATE

ACCREDITATION

YOUTH VOICE

FEATURES

ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE

POLICY&INFO

## CYBER WARNINGS

Some of the ways that the internet is misused and abused.

### Cyberbullying, harassment and stalking

*"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."*

Bill Belsey, President, Bullying.org

It is reported that 1 in 17 young people (aged 10-17) has been threatened or harassed online, whilst a staggering 52% have said hurtful things to one another.

### Flaming

*"Flaming is the hostile and insulting interaction between Internet users...most often flames are angry or insulting messages transmitted by people who have strong feelings about a subject"*

([http://www.en.wikipedia.org.uk/wiki/Flaming\\_\(internet\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org.uk/wiki/Flaming_(internet)))

### Phishing

*"[The] process of attempting to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, password and credit card details, by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication."*

(<http://www.en.wikipedia.org.uk/wiki/Phishing>)

45% of teens (aged 13-17) say they have been asked for personal information by someone they didn't know. 20% believe it is safe to share personal information online when blogging or using social networking sites and an alarming 37% are not concerned that this information may be used by someone else in a way they do not want.

### Predators

*"Predators establish contact with kids through conversations in chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mail, or discussion boards. Online predators try to gradually seduce their targets through attention, affection, kindness, and even gifts, and often devote considerable time, money, and energy to this effort. They're aware of the latest music and hobbies likely to interest kids. They listen to and sympathise with kids' problems. They also try to ease young people's inhibitions by gradually introducing sexual content into their conversations or by showing them sexually explicit material."*

(<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/family/guidelines/predators.mspx>)