

# NSG ONLINE SAFETY



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Our NSG TARGET Champions share the findings of their research.

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& We get advice from  
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## NSG Online Safety

In this issue we shine a spotlight on the fantastic work of our NSG TARGET Mentors. They have carried out research into the impact on young people of using social media and carried out a survey of our Year 8 students to find out their experiences of approaching their teenage years in a world full of social media.

In the next few pages they share what they have found out and have advice for both parents and young people on how to manage their use of social media.



# TARGET CHAMPIONS

TARGET is a branch of Service Six (Northamptonshire Youth Counselling Service) and stands for Targeting And Reducing Grooming, Exploitation and Trading of Children and Young People Online). The Project was developed as a direct result of a rise in cases of children and young people being abused by someone they had communicated with online.



Our CHAMPIONS are a group of Year 11 students that have been trained by TARGET to work with our Year 8 students. Part of that work was to investigate the Year 8's use and experiences of social media services.

## What I didn't know I didn't know

For each of our newsletters, we will be asking students to tell us the latest facts and trends appearing from Social media . This issue we have some from our Target Champions.

According to a government survey from the census March 2020, 16% of 10-15 year olds had met up with a teenager online they did not know in real life

Cyberbullying incidents increased by 70% between March and April 2020 when lockdown was at its peak.

A large percentage of students, even here at NSG, have experienced some form of cyberbullying in their life. Many people think online bullying is not important enough to report.

8.6% of year 7s have been bullied online  
Not many parents actually prepare their children for the dangers of online use.

Most parents don't understand the risks involved with social media. People are too scared to talk about their issues when on social media .

15.2% of people we surveyed had met more than 15 people they only knew from online.  
A further 6.2% of people have met with between 5-15 people they found online.

# TARGET CHAMPIONS

## Social Media Benefits and Harms

Our TARGET Champions have carried out extensive research and you'll find their conclusions below.

### Benefits

There are many benefits: creating online identity, networking and building supportive relationships with like minded teenagers; it can provide a platform for young people whose health may be compromised through physical disability and those who may feel socially isolated.

The benefit continues as an entertainment genre, access to a wider geographical area than teenagers would be able to access normally; that in itself broadens their development both intellectually, socially, culturally etc. which is a plus for mental health.

### Harms

The downside however, with social media is: it can distract teenagers from the reality of life and encourage a false sense of what identity should look and be like. So bullying, rumour spreading and peer pressures, lack of problem solving skills is more likely to occur

Finally teens by nature are impulsive and this can result in poor choices on social media like sharing inappropriate photos/stories, which can then expose them to being trolled and bullied online.

Further information. (please click the links below)

**What Role Does Social Media Use Play in the Youth Mental Health?**

**Social Media Use Increases Depression and Loneliness**

**Teens and social media use: What's the impact?**

# TARGET CHAMPIONS

## Advice for Parents

From the TARGET Champions research, please find below advice for parents on protecting young people online.

**Set reasonable limits.** Discuss/negotiate with your teenager the pros/cons of social media using real life experiences (watch documentaries etc): so that when you remove the mobile phone from them, both sides understand the reasons and also being a role model helps.

**Monitor your teenager's accounts.** Let your teenager know that you will be regularly checking their social media accounts. You might aim to do so once a week or more. Make sure you follow through.

**Explain what's not OK.** Have open communication with your teenager as this will help you to pick up on what is going on in their lives, it is more likely to bring up any information on bullying, gossiping, spreading rumours and damaging others reputation. Talk to your teenager about what is appropriate and safe to share on social media.

**Encourage face-to-face contact with friends.** This is particularly important for teenagers vulnerable to social anxiety disorder - if you can invite their friends home it will help with your awareness of who they are hanging out with.

**Talk about social media.** Have open discussion about social media in general because there is so much you can learn from your teenager, good and bad.

***PARENTS: IF IN DOUBT CHECK IT OUT!***

# TARGET CHAMPIONS

## Top Tips for Students

From the TARGET Champions research, please find below advice for teenagers on the safe use of online services.

**TIP 1:** Recognize that what you see on social media is not a true representation of people's lives. We are comparing ourselves to perfection- which doesn't exist. Social media showcases all the best aspects of life- it's rare to see the struggles. When you catch yourself falling into that comparison trap, remind yourself that what you're seeing is a highlight reel- the positive parts of life- not all the rough, negative parts. Social media is seen as being positive all the time. But in reality our lives just aren't that.

**TIP 2:** Take a break! I know, I know. That sounds crazy. But really, trust me. A social media detox works wonders for your mental health. Allow yourself to start being more present and truly experiencing life's moments. If you can't take a complete break, try limiting your time on social media each day. Instead of an hour (or more), try just 30 minutes. Or even just 10 minutes. Also- unfollow anyone or any account that makes you feel inferior.

**TIP 3:** Make a list of things you're grateful for. Gratitude helps with perspective. By trading in those negative thoughts with grateful ones, you'll see a shift in your self-esteem and your overall mental health. Seeing a list of the positive things you have in your life, can remind you that you do matter. The focus becomes on ourselves instead of others. Write it all down- big and small! You'll see that you truly do have qualities that make you worthy. Look back on the list when those feelings of comparison sneak in.

**"Beauty begins the moment you decide to be yourself"**

COCO CHANEL

# TARGET CHAMPIONS

## Some of the key facts

From the TARGET Champions research, please find below some of the key facts. *Click on any of the images for their full presentation.*

### We are NSG Target Mentors

#### [Face to face meetups]

Our survey concluded that 15.2 % of the 145 people we surveyed had met more than 15 people face to face, that they had primarily met online. But how accurate is this result? According to the census in March 2020...



**5.2%** of 10-15 year olds (212,000 children) met somebody face to face that they first met online



**87%** of people talked to their friend before meeting up with someone they met online



**20%** of 15 to 17-year-old progressed to an offline meet-up, compared to **3%** of 9-11 year olds.



**64%** of parents have restrictions to their child's social media usage.

#### Time Online

It has been statistically proven that social media is influential in having a negative impact and involvement on our mental health, especially amongst younger generations; and with more time being spent on these platforms every single day it has become apparent on just how influential social media can be. Our studies have continued to prove this undeniable link amongst the effects of social media and our wellbeing. Our research concluded that:



**81.9%** of the students who answered the survey believe their social media usage has **increased** since **lockdown**.



Over **32%** reported that they spend **over 5 hours** on **social media** every day.



**20%** of students believe social media has **affected** their **mental health** and over **34%** were **unsure**.

This research and statistics have brought to life just how significant social media is in many people's everyday life. It highlights the negative influence it can impose on many people's mental wellbeing reiterating the significance of this being an open and aware issue which people are enabled to get help and support with.

# CEOP



## Further Advice for both Young People and Parents



### Social Media

You may be wondering when is the best age to

let your child have a social media account, or have some concerns if they're already using them. For advice and guidance, read [Is your child ready for social media?](#)

Remember, most social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register.

Most young people have positive experiences socialising online, but it can be easy for young people to share things or post things they wish they hadn't.

The simplest way to have information about your child removed from a website, or app is to contact the site itself. Read [reporting to social media sites](#) for more information

Social media can offer young people opportunities to express themselves and have fun, but they could be exposed to harmful content which might include sexual images or videos which could impact on their understanding of sex and relationships.

For information, read [Teens and the sexual content on social media.](#)

### More information?

**Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency's Child Protection Command CEOP (NCA-CEOP). Their aim is to protect children and young people from sexual abuse online.**

**For more information, advice and guidance, visit their [parents website](#) and download their [home activity worksheets](#) for fun, online safety activities to do with your family.**

# CEOP



## Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online



**Parental controls:** Parental controls have been designed to help you manage your child's online activities. There are various types, some of which are free but others which can be bought. However, nothing is totally foolproof so they shouldn't replace the need for you to support and advise your child using the internet. For more information and step by step instructions on setting up parental controls, visit [Parental Controls & Privacy Settings Guides - Internet Matters](#).

**Have an ongoing conversation:** Continue to talk about the apps, games and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report . For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

**Be non-judgemental:** Explain that you would never blame them for anything that might happen online, and you will always give them calm, loving support.

**Make sure they know where to go for support:** Remind your child they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. For a breakdown of report services, visit: [Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)



# CEOP



## Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online



**Make sure they know about NCA CEOP:** Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.

**Talk about how their online actions can affect others:** If your child is engaging with peers online, remind them to consider how someone else might feel before they post or share something. If they are considering sharing a photo/video of somebody else, they should always ask permission first.

**Tell them about Thinkuknow:** Our websites provide open and honest guidance for young people on friends, relationships and the internet, covering topics like dealing with pressure; consent; and getting support when you're worried. Visit our [website for 11-18s](#) for age appropriate information.

**Direct your child to age appropriate information about relationships and sex:** It's natural for young people to start exploring their sexual feelings online and adolescents are more inclined to take risks. It's important to understand this and to talk to your child in a positive, encouraging and safe way. [Thinkuknow](#), [Brook](#), [The Mix](#) and [Childline](#) all provide age appropriate information about relationships and sex that you can signpost your child to.