DO YOUNG PEOPLE SOMETIMES FEEL THEY ARE ADDICTED TO THE INTERNET?

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## Contents

**Management Summary** 3  

1. **Background** 4  
2. **Positive aspects of using the internet** 4  
3. **Do young people perceive themselves as sometimes being addicted to the internet?** 5  
4. **In what ways do young people think that they are sometimes addicted to the internet?** 9  
5. **Degree of perceived addiction** 10  
6. **Differences in age** 11  
7. **Differences in gender** 13  
8. **The beneficial effects of socialising and social networking online** 14  
9. **The internet for entertainment** 16  
9.1 **Media content** 16  
9.2 **Gaming** 17  
10. **Do young people want restrictions on their use of the internet?** 18  
11. **Which devices are young people using to access the internet at home?** 19  
12. **Conclusions** 21  

**Appendix 1:** Sample and methodology 22  
**Appendix 2:** Charts and Tables 23
Digital technology has become increasingly integrated into our lives through mobile devices such as smartphones, Tablets and more recently wearable technology. Concerns have been raised that using these devices may potentially be addictive, and children are thought to be especially vulnerable. This report shows that the majority (61%) of the 3,500 11-17 year olds taking part in the Tablets for Schools research do not feel they are addicted to the internet. The report points out however that among the two thirds (64%) of the sample who admit to taking an internet enabled device to bed with them, half say they do sometimes feel they are addicted to the internet.

While the report demonstrates that young people perceive their digital devices as a means to socialise with their friends, be entertained, and keep abreast of current affairs, there is concern amongst some of those who feel they are sometimes addicted to the internet (40%) that they are too reliant on their device, and that they are tiring of their seemingly compulsive use of the internet.

A recent online survey of 300 parents carried out by Birmingham City University shows that addiction to digital devices is a concern for many parents. The results from this study highlight the ambivalence many parents feel towards technology. Academic research is currently unclear about the extent to which technology is associated with an addiction. Gaming and social networking are two of the areas researchers are currently analysing to find out whether the constant gratification and reward these activities offer may be linked to addictive behaviour. Professor Mark Griffiths is a chartered psychologist and Professor of Gambling Studies at Nottingham Trent University. He has argued that although technology use may become difficult to regulate for adults and children who are already physically, mentally or emotionally vulnerable, it is not in and of itself a source of addiction, ‘Doing something a lot is not necessarily an addiction’. Psychologist Professor Tanya Byron meanwhile argues that by labelling behaviour such as technology use an ‘addiction’ we run the risk of ignoring the responsibility we have as individuals and parents for our own behaviour. From our research it is clear that the term ‘addiction’ is used in the vernacular sense by many young people when it might be that they are referring to a habit rather than a compulsive condition.

It may be that we all, adults and young people, need to impose boundaries on the way in which we use our digital devices. We might question whether it is a good idea to use devices late into the night, or take the device to bed. Importantly it seems that a dialogue needs to take place between young people and the adults in their lives, be it in school or at home, about using the internet safely, wisely and in a way which enhances their wellbeing.

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1 Please note that Techknowledge for Schools changed its name from Tablets for Schools in May 2015
3 “Can we really become addicted to technology?” 1 April 2014. Professor Tanya Byron interviews Professor Mark Griffiths. BBC http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-26836457
Do young people sometimes feel they are addicted to the internet?
Tablet for Schools Research
April 2014

1. Background

There has been concern expressed about children becoming fixated on using the internet for some years, and it is a subject that Tablets for Schools wished to explore. Questions about use of the internet were part of a wider survey that was completed by over 3,500 11-17 year olds in Tablets for Schools research schools during January 2014. This report refers specifically to the question posed ‘Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet?’ In total 2,228 young people responded to the question and this was followed by an open-ended question ‘why?’. These responses have been analysed and are integrated into other findings from the research. The sample and methodology can be viewed on page 22.

2. Positive aspects of using the Internet

The majority of young people in the research, 6 out of 10 (61%), do not feel they are addicted to the internet, and it is worth exploring this a little further. It is important to make a distinction between addiction and reliance.

These young people who do not feel they are addicted are generally very positive about using the internet, and can see many benefits to its use. Rather than a threat to their wellbeing, the majority of young people view the internet as empowering; a means to explore and make connections with others, and an opportunity to find out about the environment in which they live. An important aspect of this is that they learn to use the internet safely.

_The internet is like the world; it can be horrible, it can be amazing, but you choose which way or path you take. Sometimes you make new friends, but sometimes friends are no longer friends. People need to choose how they use it and look at it: for games; for social use; they choose._

Year 8 boy (age 12-13)

The most important aspect for them however is the way in which it can enhance friendship and assist their social confidence.

_I like to see what’s happening around the world and within my friend groups._

Year 10 boy (age 12-13)
I enjoy the ease of communication with people over the internet because I struggle to talk to people face to face. Because of this I have grown used to talking to people over the internet and making friends over games and talking with them about other things which is much easier for me than it is in real life.

Year 11 boy (age 12-13)

(I’m using it for) social networking as I’m taking my A-levels and this is the closest I can come to contact with my friends during the week and contact with friends from my old school and other places which I don’t travel to often.

Sixth form boy (age 16-17)

It’s almost a pathway to the world in modern times. Everything and anything can be found on the internet. It is an easy and quick way of gaining information and contacting people you know, or people you wish to get in contact with. That is what makes it appealing, its ease of access and its capability to connect you to the world and offer you hundreds of possibilities.

Sixth form girl (age 16-17)

3. Do young people perceive themselves as sometimes being addicted to the Internet?

While the majority of young people, 6 out of 10 (61%), do not think they are addicted, nearly four out of 10 (39%) think that they are sometimes addicted, and this increases with age.

Chart 1: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the Internet: all responses?

![Chart showing the percentage of respondents who sometimes think they are addicted to the internet.](chart)

This increase with age shows a steady rise from Year 7 (11-12 year olds), with a third (33%) feeling they are sometimes addicted and peaking in Year 10 where half (49%) believe that they are sometimes addicted to the internet. The number drops down again in Year 11 (15-16 year olds).
Chart 2: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet?: by School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>67.49%</td>
<td>32.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>61.42%</td>
<td>38.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>44.40%</td>
<td>55.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>49.08%</td>
<td>50.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>56.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I think I perhaps use the internet a little too much and try to stop but can’t because I am ‘addicted’

Year 7 boy (age 11-12)

I can never get off it, and at night I stay up for like 2-3 hours after I’m meant to be asleep.

Year 7 girl (age 11-12)

I spend a lot of time on it, sometimes 2-3 hours a day.

Year 7 girl (age 11-12)

The research also found that nearly two-thirds (64%) of young people take an internet enabled device with them to bed, although as can be seen by the chart below this also varies by age, with the older cohort more likely to take a device with them to bed that the younger cohort, and once again this peaks in Year 10.
Chart 3: Do you ever take your internet enabled device to bed with you at night? by School Year

Of those who are taking an internet-enabled device to bed with them at night, two-thirds (66%) are talking to friends, and nearly two-thirds (63%) are watching films or videos. Nearly half (47%) are playing games on their own and nearly one-third (30%) claim to do their homework.

Chart 4: What do you use your device for when you take it to bed at night?: all responses

When a comparison is made between those who take an internet-enabled device to bed with them and those who feel they are sometimes addicted to the internet, the number thinking they are sometimes addicted increases from four in ten (41%) to half (50%).
It may be the case however that young people are doing what they have always done, but through a different medium. Teachers and parents may balk at the notion of doing homework in bed, but it is interesting to note that nearly a third (30%) of young people appear to find this normal behaviour.

*I search through random websites that are fun but educational at the same time.*

Year 8 boy (age 12-13)

*It helps me to do my work which I do every evening.*

Year 8 girl (age 12-13)

It is also worth noting the third (32%) who are using their devices to read at night.

*At the moment I am addicted to this reading app called Wattpad. Most of us know how hard it is to put a good book down, so I read for 30 minutes to 1 hour after I’m in bed about 3-4 days a week.*

Year 9 girl (age 13-14)
4. In what ways do young people think that they are sometimes addicted to the internet?

There appears therefore to be a correlation between taking the device to bed with them at night and young people feeling they are sometimes addicted to the internet. Of those who expressed a view in answer to the following open-ended question, young people felt strongly about possible addictive habits such as constantly checking their device and feelings of unhappiness when they were without it.

**Q: In what ways do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet?**

When asked this optional open-ended question, nearly one-third of pupils responded, expressing strong opinions.

Their responses reveal two key aspects of their perception of an addiction to the internet:

1. Ways in which young people perceive they are sometimes addicted: uses that they feel they are ‘addicted to’ online or which drive their perceived addiction
2. Differing scales and perceptions of addiction: ranging from their excessive use being a positive thing, to just the norm, to a very real concern.

**Table 1: In what ways are young people using the internet and why do they sometimes think that they are addicted to its use? (all who responded to open ended question: 1,059)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>ALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialising / social networking</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media content - video / programmes / pictures</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information/ news</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of things</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework / educational content</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The internet generally</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of boredom</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs / blogging</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence / self-expression</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books / reading</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100%
The most common online activities that drive young people’s perceived addiction are socialising and social networking (34%), media content (23%) and gaming (16%). This picture changes slightly when looked at by age group (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Ways in which young people perceive that they are addicted (all who responded to open-ended question: 1,059)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y7</th>
<th>Y8</th>
<th>Y9</th>
<th>Y10</th>
<th>Y11</th>
<th>6th Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialising / social networking</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media content - video / programmes / pictures</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of boredom</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information/ news</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework / educational content</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The internet generally</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of things</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence / self-expression</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books / reading</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs / blogging</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Degrees of perceived addiction

The open ended responses revealed that there were also degrees of perceived addiction. Comments can be summarised as follows:

Table 3: Degrees of perceived addiction (all who responded to open-ended question: 1,059)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm addicted / I use it all the time</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use it too much / it’s unhealthy</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addicted to some things / some times</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get annoyed / upset if I can't use it</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't live / function without it</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use it all the time and love it / find it useful</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is addicted / it's normal</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not addicted / I can live without it</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most young people (55%) think they are addicted because they use the internet all the time but they do not necessarily assess whether this behaviour is good or bad. Some (14%) reflect on this habit with concern and feel that they use the internet too much, but cannot seem to change their behaviour. Others (10%) claim not to use the internet all the time, but admit that they are addicted to some things, such as gaming, or at certain times such night-time.

When describing how they feel when they do not have internet access, those young people who think they are sometimes addicted tend to use emotive language such as ‘nervous’, ‘angry’, ‘paranoid’, or ‘sad’.

*The internet nearly always controls my actions. I have been told that I am addicted to the internet, and prefer its company rather than being with other people. I feel lost without the internet.*

Year 8 girl (age 12-13)

*It’s the first thing I look at in the morning and the last thing at night. It seems I’m constantly on it.*

Year 10 girl (age 12-13)

*I get nervous when I’m not on the internet for a long time. I feel like I’m missing something.*

Year 10 girl (age 12-13)

*I don’t know what to do when I’m not on the internet.*

Year 10 boy (age 14-15)

*I am always on it, and can forget about the outside world.*

Year 10 girl (age 14-15)

*When I’m on YouTube one video leads to another and I cannot stop myself from watching loads of videos and sometimes I’m up till about 2 o’clock in the morning just because I’ve been watching YouTube videos.*

Year 11 boy (age 12-13)

*I feel lonely if I don’t talk to my internet friends at least once a day.*

Year 11 girl (age 12-13)

6. Differences in age

There are key differences and similarities across the year groups amongst those who feel they are sometimes addicted to the internet. As seen above across all years the majority of young people cite their use of the internet all the time and the number of hours they spend on the internet as reasons for thinking they are addicted.

In year 7 (11-12 year olds) young people appear to be more accepting of their excessive use of the internet than in other years, perhaps because it is still new and exciting. From year 8 young people show more concern about using the internet too much and describe
themselves as potentially having an unhealthy dependency. This drops back by the 6th form when young people appear to recognise that the internet has become an integral part of everyday life for most people.

It is interesting to note that years 9-11 (age 13-16) appear to be the peak years in terms of concern about their dependency on the Internet. They are more likely to feel annoyed or upset at this age if access to the internet is not possible, and use emotive phrases to describe their feelings.

From year 10 (age 14-15), young people appear to use the Internet more as a means to alleviate boredom; at this stage usage appears to have become almost an unconscious habit.

Table 4: Degrees of perceived addiction: by School Year (why they feel they are / are not addicted: 1,059)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>6th Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m addicted / I use it all the time</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use it too much / it’s unhealthy</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addicted to some things / some times</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get annoyed / upset if I can’t use it</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t live / function without it</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use it all the time and love it / find it useful</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is addicted / it’s normal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes across the year groups reflects changes in lifestyle with age, gaming being most popular when young, and as pupils get older the variety of uses increases as the internet becomes not just a source of entertainment but a tool for their daily life. Socialising, social networking and accessing media content remains popular across the years. In Y11 and sixth form, media content is mentioned less, perhaps due to the internet’s wider variety of uses at this age.

I seriously have withdrawal if someone takes my iPad away. I walk around the house with it even though it’s not even turned on, I just like being with it! Also, my YouTube wouldn’t work for 3 days and I genuinely got moody because I couldn’t watch Pewdiepie (he’s my hero) and my other favourite channels, and when it started working I almost cried with happiness!

Year 9 girl (age 13-14)

Sometimes if I don’t use it at night I can’t sleep.

Year 9 girl (age 13-14)

If I had no Wi-Fi I would have no life.

Year 9 girl (age 13-14)

When our internet went out, I was really annoyed.

Year 11 boy (age 14-15)
7. Differences in gender

It can be seen from Table 5 below that a greater percentage of girls sometimes think they are addicted to the Internet than boys.

Table 5: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the Internet? (all responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behaviour between girls and boys differs however. It can be seen from Table 6 below that over a quarter (26%) of boys feel they are addicted to gaming compared to less than one in ten (9%) girls. In contrast four out of ten (42%) girls feel they use the internet compulsively for socialising, compared to just under one-quarter (23%) of boys. Only a small number of girls (3%) reference blogging or Tumblr as addictive; boys do not mention this. One in five (21%) girls and a quarter (25%) of boys use their device for viewing media content.

Table 6: Ways in which young people perceive that they are addicted (all who responded to the open-ended question :1,059)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialising / social networking</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media content - video / programmes / pictures</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information / news</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework / educational content</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The internet generally</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of things</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of boredom</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence / self-expression</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books / reading</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs / blogging</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons that lie behind why young people feel addicted to the Internet however are quite similar between boys and girls. Around one in ten girls (11%) and boys (9%) believe that they are addicted some of the time. Nearly six in ten (58%) girls and half (51%) of boys
think they are addicted because they use it all the time. A smaller, but similar number of boys and girls, feel they cannot function without using the internet (7% girls and 6% boys).

Table 7: Why young people feel they are addicted (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm addicted / I use it all the time</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use it too much / it’s unhealthy</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addicted to some things / some times</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't live / function without it</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get annoyed / upset if I can’t use it</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. The beneficial effects of socialising and social networking online

Although young people may describe it as a concern that they are sometimes addicted to the internet, open-ended responses reveal that they nevertheless appear to receive both enjoyment and support from interacting with their friends online, although sometimes the online dialogue can stretch into the night and can be a distraction.

Virtually all young people use some form of online social networking site, with Facetime, email and Facebook being the three most popular means to communicate with their friends (see Chart 7 below).
It seems that the compulsive nature of always checking for communication from friends is a habit that some young people find difficult to break, but such communication is equally perceived to be a fun and entertaining activity. It appears however that young people in this research are well versed in using the internet safely, and comments made reflect a cautious approach to staying safe online.

_I just always love texting, communicating, going on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and all those websites. I also love posting pictures of myself but I am always careful of what I post._

Year 7 girl (age 11-12)

_Using the internet has become a daily routine like putting on clothes in the morning ‘oh I’ll just check my Facebook’, so like putting on clothes if that routine is stopped then it would be strange to live without it._

Year 8 boy (age 12-13)
I love talking to my friends and I always FaceTime my boyfriend. I love Instagram and I love snap chatting but I don’t use the internet in inappropriate ways. I know the rules and I know when and how to be safe.

Year 9 girl (age 13-14)

The internet is also described as a way to alleviate boredom and loneliness. If a young person is feeling isolated, it seems that talking to and socialising with friends online can overcome this.

I’ve spent most of my life (on the internet) as I really only have 1 friend in my village ... to this day people I met way back then I still talk to ... a lot of them are from Canada and (across) the UK.

Year 9 boy (age 13-14)

I like to stay in contact with my friends and have access to books and music. At home I’m not really allowed out so I talk to friends via kik.

Year 9 girl (aged 13-14)

It’s the only way to talk to people out of school who live in other villages; my friends all live apart so I talk to them loads.

Year 10 girl (age 14-15)

I feel lost without talking to people.

Year 11 girl (age 15-16)

I use it a lot for social things. I’m constantly on it but I live out in the sticks and it’s kind of my only friend if you like, and I have nothing much else to do. Plus there’s interesting things on it, you get to know people and talk to them. And some things are easier to be said online than in real life.

Year 11 girl (age 15-16)

9. The internet for entertainment

9.1 Media content

Wanting to keep abreast of the latest music and film is probably a typical adolescent trait, but the internet gives young people instant access and can begin to feel addictive. While young people in the research were not asked specifically about media content, it can be seen from the chart below (Chart 8) that Instagram is used by over half (55%) of all young people. And the use of media came out strongly in the open ended comments.

I just keep checking things, like my Instagram page. I’m on that all the time.

Year 8 girl (age 12-13)

YouTube has loads of my favourite YouTubers on it so I watch them and I like to try and get my favourite celebrities to follow me on twitter 😊.

Year 8 girl (age 12-13)
(the internet) is my main way of having entertainment and communication.

Year 11 boy (age 15-16)

In Chart 8 below it can be seen that with the exception of email, which is used almost equally at school and at home, most of these sites or apps are used to communicate with friends at home.

Chart 8: Thinking about the sites that you use, do you use them mostly at school, at home or both? :all responses

9.2 Gaming

Nearly nine out of ten (88%) young people in the research use some form of gaming, with the most popular being Minecraft, Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty. The age groups using such games should be noted (see Chart 9 below).

Grand Theft Auto has a UK age rating of 18 and above. Call of Duty has an age rating of 16 and above and for some games 18 and above. Years 7 to 11 (ages 11-16) are playing both these games.
10. Do young people want restrictions on their use of the internet?

There does not appear to be a correlation between those who believe they are sometimes addicted to the internet, and a wish to have firewalls or to be able to block websites at home; indeed a sense of ‘sometimes feeling addicted’ appears to lower the wish to have restrictions. Whereas over the whole sample just over half (54%) said they would not like to have a firewall or a function to block websites at home (although 34% answered ‘don’t know’), nearly two-thirds (65%) of those who feel they are sometimes addicted to the internet said they would not like any restrictions (29% answered ‘don’t know’).

An interesting pattern also emerges in terms of taking an internet enabled device to bed at night. Young people were asked ‘Do you ever take your internet enabled device to bed with you at night?’. Nearly half (46%) who take their internet enabled device to bed claim they would like to have firewalls or be able to block websites at home. This may mean that young people would prefer to have boundaries about using the Internet late at night and being ‘always on’.
11. **Which devices are young people using to access the internet at home?**

Most of the young people in the research are using Tablets to access the Internet (86%), followed by laptops (65%) and smartphones (62%) *but please note this research was conducted with young people attending one-to-one Tablet using schools.*
Chart 11: Which of these devices, if any, do you ever use to access the internet at home? All responses.

When asked which device they use most often, it was clear that Tablets by far exceed use of laptops or smartphones.

Chart 12: Which device do you use most often?
12. Conclusions

- The majority of young people aged 11-17 in the research do not feel they are addicted to the internet (61%).
- They are positive about the advantages of using the internet, as an instrument for learning and research, and as a means of keeping in contact with friends, alleviating boredom and loneliness.
- Young people who have friends or family abroad, who have moved school or who live in isolated rural communities particularly express the benefits of the internet for maintaining a dialogue with those they do not see regularly face to face.
- Most of the young people in the research are also aware of the safety and security aspects of using the internet, and believe that used wisely it can bring them unique benefits that were not possible before.
- Overall, four out of ten young people believe that they are sometimes addicted to using the internet. Reasons given vary between concern about compulsive checking of social media, to the distraction caused by playing games or watching YouTube.
- The research also found that nearly two-thirds (64%) take an internet enabled device to bed with them at night, and they are using it in bed to talk to friends, watching YouTube or other film or picture websites, or playing a game. 30% use their device to do their homework in bed.
- It is interesting to note that of those who take an internet enabled device to bed with them at night, the number who think they are sometimes addicted to the internet rises from four in ten (39%) to half (50%).
- There are differences in age, with a belief that they are sometimes addicted to the internet rising from one-third (33%) in year 7 (age 11-12) and peaking to nearly half (49%) in year 10 (age 14-15), with the numbers dipping again from age 16+.
- While some young people describe ‘sometimes addicted’ as meaning using the internet each day for 2-3 hours, others claim a more serious problem with 6% reporting they ‘could not live’ or ‘could not function’ without the internet, and the same number (6%) claiming they get annoyed or upset if they cannot use it.
- It seems that more girls than boys view their online behaviour as sometimes addictive, with 46% of girls but only 36% of boys believing they are addicted. Their use of the internet gives an indication of why this is, with girls spending more time on social networks (and finding this ‘addictive’) and boys on games (with fewer describing this as ‘addictive’). 2 out of the 3 most popular games are rated 16/18+.
- Despite some anxiety about possible addictive behaviour expressed by four out of ten young people, over half (54%) would not like to have a firewall to prevent them accessing social media or games sites at home.
- Amongst those who are taking an internet enabled device to bed with them at night, nearly half (46%) would like to have a firewall or restrictions to prevent them accessing the internet.
- It may be that the word ‘addiction’ is a misnomer and that what is being described is a compulsive wish to always be connected to see what friends are doing, but not necessarily an addictive behaviour.
- However the level of concern expressed by young people about the need to be ‘always on’ could indicate that they would not be averse to the adults in their lives, teachers and family, making suggestions about sensible use, and an agreement that a device should not be taken to bed at night.
Appendix 1: Sample and Methodology

This survey was sent to nine secondary schools which have been using one-to-one Tablets for over a year and are taking part in the Tablets for Schools research programme. The survey was completed online between 13 -22 January 2014. In total over 3,500 responses were received (total 3,557) from pupils aged 11-18 (49% girls and 51% boys). 2% of the sample were aged 18, and for the purposes of analysis have been removed from the sample. One school was in Scotland, the remaining eight schools were spread across England, from Northumberland in the north-east, to Cornwall in the south-west, Essex and Kent in the south-east and Bath in the west.

Confidence Level
Based on a fully completed sample size of 3,482, at the 99% confidence level the confidence interval is +/- 2.19. We can therefore be 99% sure that if the whole of the 11-17 population undertook this survey, the response given would be +/- 2.19% of that reported in this survey.

The report
2,228 young people responded to the question ‘in what ways do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet?’ These open-ended responses have been fully analysed using NVivo 10 software. The analysis was split into the following sections:
- Findings across total sample – brief overview of categorised data
- Findings by year group – in-depth analysis of data for each year group with quotes
- Findings by gender – analysis of categorised data by gender

Research and analysis was carried out by FK&Y January – April 2014.

Family Kids and Youth (FK&Y) is a full service social and market research agency. It is a company partner of the Market Research Society (MRS) and abides by the MRS’s strict code of conduct in relation to conducting research with children and young people. FK&Y is on the government roster for market research with children and young people and its team of researchers has post-graduate qualifications in psychology, psychotherapy, sociology and research methodology.

All questions responded to
Appendix 2: Charts and Tables

Charts

Chart 1: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet: All
Chart 2: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet: by school year
Chart 3: Do you ever take your internet enabled device to bed with at night?: by school year
Chart 4: What do you use your device for when you take it to bed at night? All
Chart 5: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet? All
Chart 6: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet? All who take device to bed
Chart 7: Which of the following websites and apps do you use to communicate with friends?: By school year
Chart 8: Thinking about the sites that you use, do you use them mostly at school, at home or both? All
Chart 9: And which of these do you play the most? All
Chart 10: Do you ever take your internet enabled device to bed with you at night? All who said they would like to have a firewall or be able to block websites at home
Chart 11: Which of these devices, if any, do you ever use to access the internet at home? All
Chart 12: And which of these devices, if any, do you ever use to access the internet at home the most often? All
Tables

Table 1: In what ways are young people using the internet and why do they sometimes think that they are addicted to its use? (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 9

Table 2: Ways in which young people perceive that they are addicted (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 10

Table 3: Degrees of perceived addiction (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 10

Table 4: Degrees of perceived addiction by school year (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 12

Table 5: Do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet? (all responses) 13

Table 6: Ways in which young people perceive that they are addicted (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 13

Table 7: Why young people perceive that they are addicted (all who responded to the open-ended question: 1,059) 14