



# Children and the internet

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## Section one

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# Research objectives and methodology



# Research objectives

- To explore wider social impacts (benefits and drawbacks) of home internet access for children
- Children's views of having and not having internet access at home
- The impact of parents' attitudes on having internet access at home
- To understand whether the lack of access further disadvantages already disadvantaged children
- Understanding the barriers beyond financial limitations and how these can be addressed



# Sample & Methodology

**The overall target for research was socially disadvantaged children and families (DE Social Economic Grade)**

- Specifically we spoke to :
  - Parents of 5 to 16 year olds
  - Children aged 5 to 16 (discussions focused on 8 to 16 year olds)
- The was split into two:
  - Those **with** broadband internet access at home
  - Those **without** broadband or dial-up internet access at home
- A range of qualitative methodologies were used: in home observations, family interviews, sibling interviews, parents interviews, group discussions
- Research took place in Glasgow, Newcastle, Leicester, Birmingham, London: (Southwark, Haringey and Lewisham)



# Section two

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## Overview of findings



# Overview of findings

**This study has illuminated a depth and breadth of insight with regard to socially disadvantaged families and the internet at home**

- Technology is a dominant force in their lives & children can not imagine life without it
- The internet is an intoxicating resource for all children, especially tweens & teens
  - Those who do not have it feel left out and lack the social currency which is often essential in the playground
  - Some kids are better able to deal with not having internet at home than others
- The internet has a more polarising effect amongst parents as attitudes and behaviour are influenced by a diverse range of factors
- Clear parental typologies emerge, which will require different strategies to support adoption of the internet at home

**It is a complex debate that touches on many social issues**



# Section three

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## Children and technology



# Technology is at the heart of what many families do



# Children's rooms resemble bed sits!



DVD



TV



Computers &  
the internet



Music



Games  
consoles



Mobiles





## **Section four**

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# **Families with the internet**



# Families with the internet

**The internet has quickly become an essential part of family life**

**Window on the world  
About exploring new possibilities**

**It is about building &  
maintaining relationships  
MSN  
Email  
Social networks**

**Convenient resource for  
school work, home  
management  
and hobbies**

**Even when money  
is tight it is given priority  
A bit like multi channel TV  
It is an essential**

**Strongly held belief that not having the internet at home will effect their children's prospects of succeeding at school and then in their careers**

# The downside of having internet at home



## Practical concerns

Expensive  
on going costs

Music downloads  
block PC memory

Viruses

## Emotional impacts

Addictive  
Sibling squabbles

Less time being  
together as family

Parents with no  
internet skills  
can feel isolated

## Safety issues

Child  
internet safety

Privacy fears

Internet fraud

In spite of these challenges they have made having a computer and internet access at home a priority

Recognising its value for their children's social and intellectual development



## **Section five**

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# **Families without the internet**



# Families without the internet

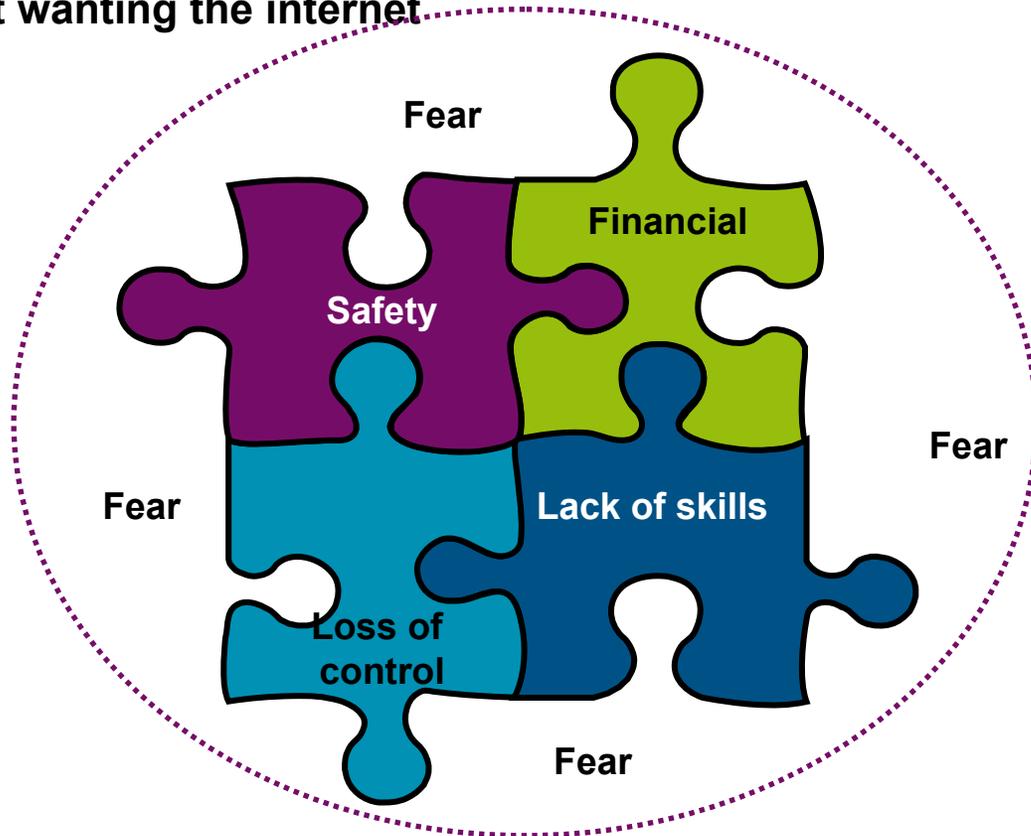
## These families often have an array of technologies in their homes

- No obvious or discernable differences in relation to their lifestyles or homes to those families who have internet access at home
- However, some families seem to have less technology or less current/top of the range technology
  - e.g. Game Cube not PSP, Freeview not Sky
  - Can reflect a more controlling parenting style, where parents determine what is needed according to their agenda
  - And/or a more traditional attitude to money - Living within means

**Technology does play a significant role in families who do not have the internet at home**

# Barriers to having the internet at home

Usually not just one barrier, but a number of interlocking issues, help justify the overall feelings of not wanting the internet.



In some families all these factors are at play in others it might only be financial constraints that are stopping them from getting the internet



## **Section six**

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# **Parents and the internet**



# Parental typologies

Have the internet at home

Don't have the internet at home

Embrace the internet at home

Reject the internet at home

Techsperts

Advocates

Recently converted

Planners

Considerers

Fearfuls

- Had before children arrived
- Dad often Technology 'junkie'

- Part of family life
- Parents often enjoy too

- Honey moon period
- Kids and parents love

- Are planning to get
- Resolved emotional issues
- Getting £ together

- Increasing pressure from Kids
- Dealing with emotional anxieties
- Still £ fears

- Stuck
- Entrenched views
- Will need personal help and support to shift



# Supporting parents

Planners	Considerers	Fearfuls
<p><b>Practical advice on finances</b> What is the true cost? What equipment and broadband capacity do they need for their requirements?</p> <p><b>Practical reassurance and encouragement</b></p>	<p><b>Rational and emotional support</b> More information about the benefits especially education and for parents too</p> <p>Reassurance that can get one price access that won't escalate</p> <p><b>Emphasising the benefits for their children and breaking down the financial barriers</b></p>	<p><b>Education and empowerment</b> ICT training that allows them to ask really basic questions</p> <p>Target anxieties about fraud and internet safety</p> <p>Emotional and rational support (esp. females single parent)</p> <p>For men, stress tangible benefits it offers their children, plus potential benefits for their life too!</p>



## **Section seven**

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# **Children and the internet**

# Children with the internet at home

Children with the internet at home can't imagine life without it

Making and building friendships



Learning about  
the world



Getting ideas and  
finding out

Having fun  
and gaming



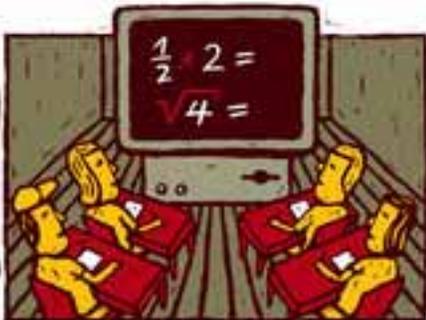
Shopping and finding  
out about things  
to buy



Doing fun things  
together as a family



Helping with school work





# What would life be like without it

Since we got rid of it, I haven't played my game and that's all I want to do.  
(Boy 13, London)

I probably have got skills I don't even realise I'm getting, but it could help me get a job.  
(Girl 13, London)

I would just scream at my mum and dad until we got it back.  
(Girl 11, Glasgow)

My mum always bans me from MSN it's a nightmare, so annoying.  
(Girl 13, London)

**To not have the internet as a teen or tween feels dramatic, it is another vehicle through which they develop their identities**



# What about school work?

**The internet has made education more fun, even for those less academically engaged**

- Using interactive whiteboards at school and then linking to work at home on internet engages more types of learners
- Brings homework to life, moving away from traditional books
  - Kids with access at home have freedom to explore topics introduced at school at their own leisure
  - And to complete homework when they like
- Informal learning- young people are sponges so pick up knowledge and skills inadvertently searching and synthesising information

**Despite these benefits, children and young people are far less interested in the educational benefits Vs the social opportunities it offers them**



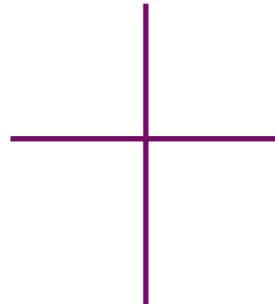
# The impact on their futures



## Primary

Mostly about playing games and exploring  
Developing a skills base and confidence that can help progress and initiative when older

**Playful learning preparing them for their futures**



## Secondary

Maintaining and building social networks  
Building confidence and self expression  
Exploring school topics and career opportunities

**Social currency and school support**



# The type of child does influence how they use technology and the internet



**Specialist**

Technology & internet a hobby  
Less interested in social aspect of the web  
Intense gamers



**Leader**

Loves the internet for anything social and keeping in the know  
A tool to keep them in the 'leader' position



**Follower**

Like to keep 'up' and 'in' with their peer set  
The social aspect of the internet is crucial to their lives



**Outsider**

Can be a bit of a loner  
The internet allows them to break in to the 'in' crowd and Get access to social currency

# Children without internet at home

Nearly all children without it wish that they had it (younger ones are less adamant)



Being different



Feel left out and  
socially  
isolated



School work is not as impressive



Requires effort  
to access



Try to justify  
but many struggle



Reinforces sense that  
money is tight at home

# The impact of not having the internet at home on different types of children



**Specialist**

Unable to pursue passion and develop skills  
Want a career in technology, but fear they lack experience and access



**Leader**

Have coping strategies to avoid potential exclusion  
Trade on other skills (clothes, music, gossip)  
Gain access via innovative methods



**Follower**

Internet is important to fit in, lose thread of fast moving conversations and lack the right social currency  
Struggling to keep up with peers



**Outsider**

Don't have many friends and can be easy targets for bullies  
Not having access at home compounds their isolation



# The impact on their futures

## Children do not think about the long term impacts of not having the internet at home

- For all children the concept of a job/career is a long way off
- On a conceptual level all ages imagine that it may rule them out from working with computers and jobs which rely heavily on technology
- Tweens and teens also raise the social impact as well as the impact it could have on their careers
  - Socially= Less confident, possibly fewer friends, less of a support system
  - Work/ career = Specific computer based skills, speed, confidence, knowledge of specific packages
  - Careers research= Inability to appreciate the variety of career choices available to them

I just think I'm missing out as I'm not as confident using it, especially typing and downloading.  
(Girl 13, sample B, Newcastle)

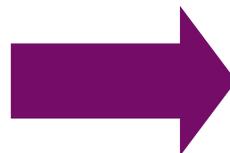
Children are much more interested in the here and now



# Children believe that their lives would be better if they had the internet at home



**Bored and alone**



**Social and having fun**



## **Section eight**

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# **Implications and opportunities**



# Implications and opportunities

- **A stark contrast exists between those children who have it and those who don't**
  - Children who don't have access feel both self conscious and socially isolated
  - The extent of this 'exclusion' depends on the capabilities and personality of the children
- **Parents with the internet at home believe that it is going to give their children some advantage in the future**
  - However, having the internet at home does not guarantee social and educational achievement. It strongly depends on how it is used and controlled and the type of child using it
- **Parents who don't have internet at home, have both practical concerns (£) and many emotional barriers to overcome**
  - Educate and empower parents about the wealth of uses for them and their children and demystify their fears. A communication campaign could help to achieve this
- **More socially isolated parents will need more personal help and encouragement**
  - These parents are less likely to respond to a communication campaign alone
  - They need more hand holding and personal reassurance that they are making a positive choice for their children