

The internet has been a lifeline for most young people during the pandemic, in terms of their education and social lives but also in helping to provide emotional support.

However, the internet also presents them with challenges around trust and reliability. For instance, almost half of young people are seeing misleading online content regularly. For some of them, this is many times per day.

Young people want to do something about this and have shared their ideas and demands with us. Here is their message.

The UK Safer Internet Centre has worked with young people to develop a Young People's Charter for Safer Internet Day 2021 on how government and online stakeholders can help create a more trustworthy internet.

We have produced this Charter from speaking to primary and secondary age children in focus groups, consulting members of the Youth Advisory Board, Childnet Digital Leaders and Digital Champions, surveying young people, and reviewing the findings from our latest research. This charter of four key points comes directly from the young people we spoke to.

Young People's Charter



We deserve an internet we can trust, and we call on the government and online stakeholders to listen to our voice:

1

Teach safe internet use: More than three-quarters of young people say being online is a more important part of their life than ever before while 65% have enjoyed online lessons during lockdowns. Its role for our generation is clear. Therefore, we are calling on the government to ensure young people receive regular, good quality education about the internet from an early age – and that they incorporate digital media literacy into the school curriculum. We want to be able to safely access and enjoy all that the online world offers and have the knowledge and skills to separate fact from fiction.

"We need to be educated on the risks of misleading content, and more importantly how to identify it, both at home and at school."

Youth Advisory Board member

3

Hold platforms to account:

We are calling on the government, website providers, social media platforms and online content producers to do more to tackle misleading content online. Almost 80% of young people would like to see online platforms play their part, while nearly three-quarters feel the government can do more to ensure the online content we see is safe, reliable and trustworthy. We need to have confidence in the information we access online and be able to easily flag and report misinformation when we see it.

"The government and media companies can create and enforce policies that ensure people are safe from misinformation – and create better awareness, education and funding."

Youth Advisory Board member

2

Protect us online: Almost half of young people are seeing misleading content every day. This is not acceptable and leaves many of us annoyed, upset, angry, even feeling attacked or scared. We need to ensure all young people are aware of how to recognise misleading online information and know the steps they can take to report, fact-check and evaluate it.

"We want to feel safe when we go on a website or app. It's important for the government to see what's on the internet, monitor it and help to take action."

Primary school pupil

4

Let us help shape the internet: Today, young people use the internet for education, entertainment, keeping in touch with friends and even for seeing family members. We use it to learn more about the world around us and how that world is evolving, meaning it is more important than ever that we are able to trust what we see. Everyone has a responsibility to make the internet a safer place, including us. It is our internet and we want to be involved in shaping its future. Consult us, involve us, help us keep it safe – and take action that helps create an internet we can all trust.

"We should have our say because we are the future, and as we grow we are going to be using social media and the internet even more."

Secondary school pupil