

## Online safety – what’s the issue for those who are not online?

This paper has been prepared as part of some partnership work between Carnegie UK, the Centre for Ageing Better, Good Things Foundation and the One Digital Community of Practice (CoP) who have identified this area as one that is being raised by partners working in digital inclusion projects. It has the following sections

1. Online safety in practice contexts: identifying a practice need
2. Online safety and security as a barrier for people getting online (current research)
3. Current resources available to support good practice

Definition: It is important to define what we mean by online safety: for the purposes of this paper and work with partners we are including the need to develop skills to keep your computer and yourself safe online. This would include being able to recognise and manage risks and the knowledge of how to keep your data secure. The [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#) includes a category for ‘being safe and legal online’ with a focus on the skills required to stay safe, legal and confident online. Our focus will not include wider areas of online harms such as cyber bullying.

### Section 1: Online safety in practice contexts: identifying a practice need

Digital Champions and projects often raise the issue of online safety and how it is a concern for the often disadvantaged learners that they work with. Recent work within the Community of Practice confirms that online safety is seen as being a major barrier for most groups with some form of disadvantage. Good practice work with the Centre for Ageing Better with projects supporting older people highlighted this as a barrier which was perceived as being not easily overcome. A CoP event [Making digital accessible for everyone](#) which involved 21 partner contributors discussing their project work with a wide variety of groups including people with disabilities or where the learners have English is a second language also identified online safety as a significant barrier. Projects were also focused on the resources they could use to support their learners most effectively.

For many this area was identified as critical for developing skills. The need for appropriate resources, for instance for those with learning disabilities, or older people who have much lower levels of digital skills generally was an area of development for some partners. Also of concern in the projects is how new internet users become more limited internet users because of fears around being safe online.

The question for partners is, given the reasonably wide availability of resources from different partners to support people to be safe online, why this is still a barrier for projects? The concerns seem to relate to the following:

- How to provide guidance and reassurance to people who are currently not online to reduce this as a barrier. What are the key messages that we need to share and how can we keep them simple enough to make them fully accessible and have impact?

- How to deal with specific issues for Digital Champions on online safety and privacy including:
  - How to maintain privacy in public places such as libraries or community hubs which are often used as spaces for community learning.
  - Providing guidance to Digital Champions on working with vulnerable learners who often cannot remember their passwords.
  - How organisations/projects provide clear guidance on online safety and role boundaries for volunteer Digital Champions? This is especially relevant when for instance supporting someone to shop online, or to complete a benefit application online.

Campaigns such as ‘Safer internet day’ and learning materials/tech guides provide key information. Information on resources available are highlighted below.

### **Government Strategy/Policy context**

The UK government has indicated through a Green Paper that they intend to legislate to improve online safety. Their response to the consultation on the Green Paper has been published and a White Paper is now expected, followed by legislation, [Internet Safety Strategy](#) Some work has already commenced including through the 2017 Digital Economy Act, the publication of a [Digital Charter](#) and a Social Media code of practice. In Scotland there is a [National Action plan for internet safety for children and young people](#). A lot of work on cyber security is also being carried out both within the UK and Europe and the introduction of the GDPR regulations has increased focus particularly on the use of personal data.

## **Section 2: Online safety and security as a barrier for people getting online**

The current research into what factors act as barriers for those who are not online is not conclusive as there are apparent differences between work carried out by Lloyds and published in the 2019 Consumer Digital Index and research published by Helsper and Reisdorf in 2013 [Quantitative analysis of explanations for reasons for non-internet use](#) and in 2019 by Good Things Foundation [Digital Motivations](#) which identified four reasons people give (1) it’s not for me (2) the support I need is not available to me (3) it’s too complicated and (4) the cost of going online is too much for me. Ofcom research states ‘In order to understand the barriers to take-up, we ask those who do not use the internet their reasons for not going online; more than half say they do not see the need or “it’s not for people like me” or they are not interested. Just over one in five mention a reason for non-use relating to it “being too complicated” while 15% mention a cost-related reason.’ Looking in more detail into the report and the ‘it’s not for me’ group, the reasons for people not going online are complex and

‘Non-users who state the internet is not for them or people like me do not see the personal benefit in being online. They have had no real need or purpose to go online meaning they do not see how the internet can add value to their

current situation. In order for this group to feel motivated towards going online, the personal relevance needs to be made explicit at an individual level. “I don’t have that kind of a lifestyle where I need to use technology, I’m very out in the community, I engage one to one, I do other voluntary work in the community garden - obviously you don’t need a computer in the garden”  
Interviewee

Some people within this group also have an underlying fear of using the internet. The Ofcom data enforces previous research that individuals feel wary due to misconceptions or lack of knowledge such as understanding how their content can be shared along with an awareness of who uses their data and shares their details online. By staying offline, they may also feel they avoid the risk of a negative experience like being exposed to hateful content or falling victim to fraud online.’

A recent study by the [Technology in Later Life \(TILL\)](#) project which had a focus on older adults in the UK and Canada who were users of the internet highlighted that concerns about privacy continue amongst those who are active. [Older adults perceptions of ICT: Main Findings from the Technology in Later Life \(TILL\) project](#)

‘Despite identifying the facilitators of technology use, the factors that limited or discouraged them from using technology were also identified. In many cases, participants explained a simple lack of interest in technology use. In general, participants reported feeling apprehensive about the rate of technological change and some felt they had difficulty keeping up. Concerns about sharing too much information and the potential to be an invasion of privacy also lent itself to feelings of apprehension; especially if one did not realise that privacy settings were needed to ensure all information shared was kept between friends.’

The 2018 and 2019 Ofcom [Adults media use and attitudes reports](#) agree that the reasons for non-engagement are complex with cost being a significant factor. In 2019 the report stated:

‘In order to understand the barriers to take-up, we ask those who do not use the internet their reasons for not going online; more than half say they do not see the need or “it’s not for people like me” or they are not interested. Just over one in five mention a reason for non-use relating to it “being too complicated” while 15% mention a cost-related reason.’

The table below (from the 2018 report) shows 19% of those researched gave ‘lack of trust/being online is not safe/secure’ as their reason for not wanting to be online.

**Figure 154: Reasons for not going online, by age of non-user**

	All non- internet users aged 16+	Aged 16-64	Aged 65+
It's just not for people for like me/ I don't see the need	52%	42%	57% ↑
I don't trust the internet/ being online is not safe/secure	19%	23%	17%
I don't have the right equipment	17%	17%	16%
Using the internet, finding your way around on the internet is too complicated	16%	12%	20%
I don't have the right help to know how to start	14%	9%	16%
The equipment needed to go online is too expensive/ not worth the money	11%	19% ↑	5%
Getting online/ getting connected to the internet is too complicated	11%	9%	12%
Being connected to the internet is too expensive/ not worth the money	7%	12% ↑	3%
UNPROMPTED - I'm not interested	4%	2%	7%
UNPROMPTED - I'm too old for it/ not for people my age	3%	0%	4% ↑
UNPROMPTED - Don't need to as someone else in the household (husband/wife) goes online	2%	2%	1%
Other	5%	9%	3%
Don't know	3%	5%	1%
ANY REASON RELATING TO 'BEING TOO COMPLICATED'	22%	19%	26%
ANY REASONS RELATING TO 'COST'	15%	25% ↑	7%

Source: Ofcom Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2017

IN8A. Which of these reasons describe why you don't go online? (prompted responses, single coded)

Base: Adult internet users aged 16+ who do not go online (305 aged 16+, 114 aged 16-64, 191 aged 65+)

Arrows show significant differences (95% level) between non-users aged 16-64 and those aged 65+

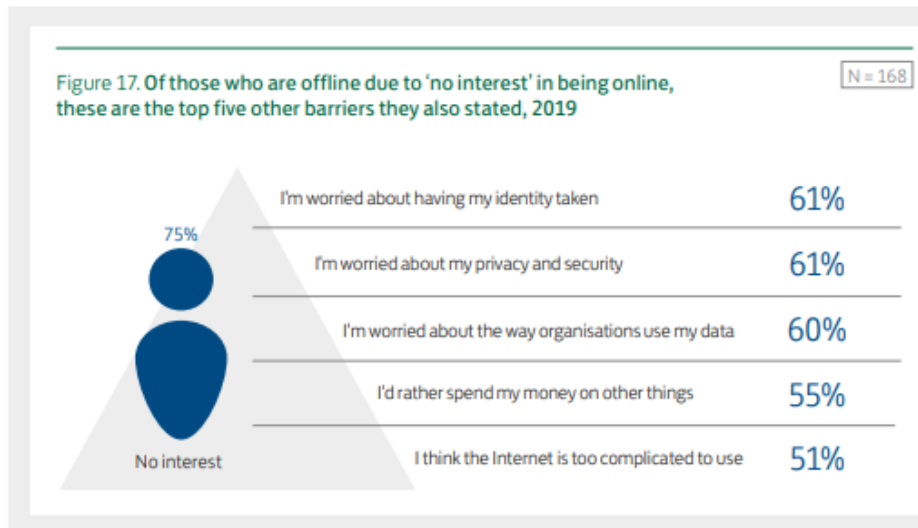
More recent work by Ofcom (published in 2019) [Internet users' experience of harm online 2019](#) gives clear evidence of the types of concern that current adult internet users have. In response to a question 'Do you have any concerns about the internet?', the top three unprompted concerns are: scams/fraud 44%, personal information being stolen or hacked 38% and personal information being processed without knowledge 33%.

The views of current internet users will be likely to impact on current non-users, especially given that 84% of current users confirm they have a concern in general and when 61% report having had potentially harmful online experiences in the last 12 months.

Carnegie UK have also published research into 'how once people are digitally engaged they navigate the online world safely and confidently' and published a report [Digitally savvy citizens](#) in 2017 which examined attitudes (in the UK and Ireland) to use of data – for instance publishing photos online; use of public Wi-Fi; sources of information and verification of information, considering how trusting people are of the information they access online.

The research published in the **Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2019** shows a potential change in barriers to getting online. It found that 58% of people who have not used the internet in the last three months said concerns about online safety and security were a barrier (this was an increase of 123% on the previous year's responses). A new question (in 2019) confirmed that 60% of respondents were concerned specifically about identify theft. These two concerns are now listed as the second and third most important reasons for not being online (after not having an interest).

The table below explains in more detail the barriers for those who are offline due to no interest and highlights how concerns about security are a significant factors.



### Cybersecurity concerns underpin motivational barriers to being online

The data has illustrated that the main barrier preventing people from going online is motivation (figure 16: 'no interest'). Of the 75% of the Offline who gave this answer, 89% stated more than just 'no interest'. Figure 17 shows the top five other barriers given by this group. The top three are cybersecurity related; identity theft, privacy, and concern over the way their data may be used.

This suggests that while a lack of interest may be the perceived barrier, underpinning this is a strong set of concerns revolving primarily around cybersecurity.

After cybersecurity related barriers, 55% say there are other things they would rather spend money on and 51% say they are also offline because they lack the knowledge and capability to use the Internet, were they online.

Lloyds also considered how many people have Essential Digital Skills and published analysis relating specifically to ‘being safe and legal online’.

### Being Safe and Legal Online



Whilst nearly 80% overall have the skills needed for online safety (in the skills for life category), this drops to 48% for over 65s. As this group’s use of the internet is growing fast this would be a priority for targeting training and resource information.

Data on skills for work shows 66% having competency in ‘being safe and legal online’. Further analysis shows this drops to 46% for the C2DE socio-economic category.

### [Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index](#)

**Conclusion** - It will be interesting to see whether this trend of online safety being a barrier and concern for those who are not online is evidenced in other studies and through some project based research that the partners are planning.

## **Section 3: Current resources available to support good practice**

The key websites are:

[Information Commissioners Office Your Data Matters](#)

[Get Safe Online](#)

[ThinkUKnow](#), [Internet matters](#) and [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - aimed at children and families/carers or organisations working with young people

[Age UK internet security](#) – aimed at older people

[Digital Unite Technology guides](#) – see details below

### **Online security – resources available on the Digital Champions Network and via the Digital Unite website**

121 and group based session plans and Digital Champions training courses are available only to registered Digital Champions Network (DCN) users.

All learner tech guides are publicly available on the Digital Unite website

The training courses for Digital Champions (accessible for registered users) which include online safety as part of the content are:

- Online security, banking and money
- Using your role to help customers get online
- Essential for engaging with older people
- How to use the Internet to develop your professional profile
- Finding a job 1 & 2
- How to develop your professional profile
- Making and saving money
- Digital Champion Essentials

### **Online safety basics and identify theft**

121 and group based session plans are available via the DCN.

Guides for learners – there are 13 guides available in this section covering topics such as choosing a password and identity theft.

External resource: [Internet computer security guide](#)

### **Anti-virus, malware and firewalls**

121 and group based session plans via the DCN.

Guides for learners – there are 6 guides available covering topics such as anti-virus protection.

### **Data protection & GDPR**

121 and group based session plans via the DCN.

Guides for learners – there are 4 guides available covering topics such as GDPR and data encryption.

### **Internet safety for children**

Guides for learners – there are two guides available including one covering cyberbullying.

### **Other relevant technology guides available for DCs and learners**

- How to shop safely online
- How to stay safe on Facebook

### **Other partners**

The importance of this to wider partners is illustrated by the work done by -

Good Things Foundation on [Helping vulnerable people stay safe online](#) and specific guidance from the same project with TalkTalk on supporting older people [Older people's handbook](#)

The Learn My Way platform has learning resources available for Digital Champions on [Online safety](#)

Carnegie UK have published work specifically on the role of libraries in encouraging best practice in data privacy [Public libraries can lead the way on privacy](#)

Haddington CAB who have prepared their own session plan to help people to teach key messages around online safety [Haddington CAB Stay Safe Online workshop](#)

Barclays Digital Wings programme includes a section on [Online safety, security and fraud](#) which is aimed at learners.