

<b>Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 36: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</b>
<b>Title of case study: Empowering children online through literacy and safety initiatives</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>LSE research has helped shape children's internet literacy and safety policy. In the UK, the research informed the establishment of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) and the creation by the Council of the UK's first Child Internet Safety Strategy. Based on the research, the Council tasked industry to improve safety tools, and raised awareness among parents and teachers. This has enhanced children's online opportunities, digital literacy and ability to cope with online risks, thereby reducing the probability of harm. In Europe, the research informed the European Commission's Safer Internet Programme's work on industry guidance, safety tools and awareness campaigns, shifting the emphasis from protecting children to empowering them to use the internet safely and with confidence. Policy and practical initiatives around the world draw on the methodology and findings of the research.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><u>Research Programme and Key Findings:</u></p> <p>Children have been online since the early days of the internet. The past fifteen years were decisive in establishing a policy framework for their empowerment and protection online. Livingstone as Principal Investigator led a sustained research programme at LSE from 1995-2014 with some £4 million in external grants which has been highly influential in developing that policy framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Children and their changing media environment</i> (1995-99), a multi-method study of children's new media uses in 12 countries, funded by the BBC, Leverhulme, BT, EC and others (1, 2).</li> <li>• The ESRC-funded <i>UK Children Go Online</i> (UKCGO, 2003-5), a multi-method study of young internet users, non-users and parents. This was graded 'Outstanding' and a model of impact by the ESRC (3). <a href="http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/features-casestudies/casestudies/2784/safe-web-space-for-children.aspx">www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/features-casestudies/casestudies/2784/safe-web-space-for-children.aspx</a></li> <li>• <i>EU Kids Online</i> (2006-14) was conducted in three phases and included a survey of 25,142 9-16 year olds in 2010. It was funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme, which graded it 'Excellent' (5, 6). See <a href="http://www.eukidsonline.net">www.eukidsonline.net</a></li> </ul> <p>In the early climate of techno-optimism and media panics, policy makers divided into those (educators, civic bodies) seeking to maximise opportunities and those (welfare, police, clinicians) concerned to minimise risks. By looking at children's internet use in context, the research showed the need for these approaches to be integrated (3, 6). It developed a classification of online risks that recognises the child's agency and skills and produced benchmark findings on risk prevalence (5), which is now used by UK government and the EC. It demonstrated a 'ladder of online opportunities' which outlines an ideal-typical path that starts with a child's reception of mass-produced content which he/she then may go on to use in a skilled, participatory and creative way.</p> <p>To preclude an overly restrictive approach to parental and other safety mediation, the research distinguished risk (e.g. exposure to online sexual content) from harm (e.g. a child being adversely affected by such exposure), showing that not all exposure results in harm. Thus the research identified the socio-economic, demographic, psychological and other factors that make children vulnerable, as well as the factors that can help protect them, such as digital skills, parental mediation, use of technical tools, and risk-taking – insofar as this builds resilience (6). It found that a child's digital skills bring risks as well as opportunities and that parental actions to reduce children's exposure to risk can reduce their online opportunities (6). Ambiguous activities, such as the risky opportunities of self-disclosure or making new contacts online, need especial care (4, 6).</p> <p>The research established a robust explanatory framework and a practical measurement instrument for cross-national surveys (1, 2, 5), as well as benchmark findings to assess children's online opportunities and risks in the UK, Europe and internationally (1, 3, 5). This legitimated a policy shift from risk avoidance – and the associated moral panics – to harm reduction by targeting policy</p>

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according to vulnerability and protective factors.

*Key Researchers:* Professor Livingstone has been at LSE since 1990. Her research project employed postdoctoral (Bovill 1995-2001, Bober 2003-5, Haddon 2006-14, Görzig 2009-11) and pre-doctoral researchers (Helsper, Ólafsson). Livingstone coordinated a 33 country network of 150 researchers. The work led to Livingstone receiving an Honorary Doctorate from the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2008.

### 3. References to the research and quality indicators

1. Livingstone, S., and Bovill, M. (Eds.) (2001) *Children and their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum. [390 citations] <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/11222/>
2. Livingstone, S. (2002) *Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment*. London: Sage. [Peer reviewed; 761 citations] <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3422>
3. Livingstone, S. and Bober, M. (2005) *UK Children Go Online: Final report of key project findings*. LSE Report. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/399/> [346 citations]
4. Livingstone, S. (2008) Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression. *New Media & Society*, 10(3): 393-411. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/27072/> [Peer reviewed; 635 citations]
5. Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/> [262 citations]
6. Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., & Görzig, A. (Eds.) (2012) *Children, Risk and Safety on the Internet: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*. Bristol: Policy Press. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44761/>

### 4. Details of the impact

In this field, UK policy often lays the foundation for EU initiatives. UKCGO and EU Kids Online are widely acknowledged as primary sources of evidence for the multiple stakeholders working to improve children's literacy and safety online.

#### UK policy impacts

Informed by the findings of UKCGO, the Department for Education's *Home Access Programme* offered reduced-cost, safe computer and internet access to the UK's poorest children (2007-11). The UKCGO research suggested that providing online access in disadvantaged families results in educational benefits but that children's safety must also be addressed.

The research influenced the *Byron Review (A)*, commissioned by Prime Minister Brown. Byron said, "I have approached classification of the online risks to children...in line with a model developed by the EU Kids Online project". The research's benchmark findings broadened the risks (cyber-bullying, 'sexting' and privacy risks, as well as grooming by paedophiles) addressed by successive awareness campaigns. The Byron Review led to the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS), which produced the UK's first Child Online Safety Strategy in 2011. This reflects the research's stress on balancing opportunities and risks and enhancing digital literacy. It led to the inclusion of e-safety in the school computing curriculum and Ofsted inspection regime.

Efforts to empower children online in the UK gained impetus following the success of the *Home Secretary's Taskforce for Child Protection on the Internet (2008)*. The Taskforce established self-regulatory codes of guidance on Safe Search, Chat, Moderation, Social Networking and Mobiles. Updated by UKCCIS in 2010, this resulted in multiple safety improvements in industry provision and practice, benefiting UK child internet users and their families. The codes (B) drew on the research's findings on children's use of social networking sites, filtering and reporting tools, and their practices of 'friending', privacy, risk-taking and vulnerability to harm.

Turning the strategy into action, UKCCIS' *Advice on child internet safety 1.0: Universal guidelines for providers (C)* relied on the research for its definitions and evidence of risk and harm. UKCCIS members (commercial fixed line, handset, software and content providers, police, schools and NGOs) promote this user-friendly safety advice to UK children and parents, along with technical and human support such as customer services, reporting tools, privacy settings and helplines. Livingstone's research on the incidence of risk and gaps in parental mediation, including parental struggles to install filters, informed the Internet Service Providers' (UK fixed line) first Parental

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Controls Code of Practice (D), signed by *BT, Talk Talk, Virgin Media and Sky*. Endorsed by Prime Minister Cameron, domestic filters are now being turned on unless the homeowner turns them off.

A key impact of the research was to change the terms of the public debate, from panicky restrictions on children's internet use to recognising children's rights online and awareness of the benefits of active parental mediation. Livingstone's public outreach has been extensive. National and international media reports of the research total 1800+, with Livingstone interviewed for the *Daily Mail, Times, Guardian, Der Spiegel, Huffington Post, Panorama, Today, C4 News, GMTV Breakfast News, R4 Bringing Up Britain, You and Yours, Woman's Hour, Sky News and Newsnight*. She contributed to Safer Internet Day, which the BBC estimates 10% UK population (14% of teens) heard in 2013, two thirds of whom said they would change their online behaviour as a result. [www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/news/1-in-7-teens-heard-about-safer-internet-day-2013](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/news/1-in-7-teens-heard-about-safer-internet-day-2013)

Since 2008, Livingstone gave 90+ talks to non-academic audiences (e.g. conferences for Head Teachers, Directors of Children's Services, police, clinicians, industry and the public). Some 40 non-academic reports and writings were widely distributed: for example, in *Digital Parenting Magazine* (1 million copies reached parents/schools in 2010-12), YouTube interviews (several thousand views e.g. "Child abuse on the internet: risks and reality"; for UNICEF, viewed 1055 times). The EU Kids Online network counts five times as many talks and media mentions; report downloads are 20,000+ since 2010, website visits total several hundred thousand.

#### European/International policy impacts

EU Kids Online was closely involved in framing and evaluating new industry self-regulation on social networking sites in 2009 (*The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU*) which resulted in higher safety standards across the EU27. Building on this successful initiative, and citing EU Kids Online findings on how young children go online, EC Vice President Kroes established a Coalition of industry CEOs to 'make the internet a better place for children.' Livingstone presented the research to the Coalition (Brussels, 2012: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213/>). The Coalition confirmed implementation in 2013, citing EU Kids Online findings ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-504\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-504_en.htm)). The Coalition established higher standards for parental controls, content classification, reporting tools, privacy settings and elimination of child abuse images.

Following the EC's 2011 assessment (G) of child protection as part of the Digital Agenda for Europe, a 2012 EC Communication established the first *European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children* (D). Both the assessment and the Communication relied on the research's framework and findings for children's internet uses and literacy. This guided recent EU efforts to empower children online through multiple literacy and safety initiatives. For example, after EU Kids Online found that many children are dissatisfied with available online content, notably in small language countries, the EC Safer Internet Programme established the *European Award for Best Children's Online Content* to promote online opportunities for children (Livingstone chairs the European Jury). Insafe - the European Network of Awareness Centres - used the findings (e.g. on generational misunderstandings, digital skill gaps, emerging risks, needs of young users) to target its efforts (e.g. <http://www.saferinternet.org/web/quest/digitaluniverse>). In the EC's 'benchmarking of safer internet policies' (2013), the research was identified as a major source for most member states and the sole source of evidence in six (<http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/creating-better-internet-kids>).

In promoting online safety internationally, the OECD (E) cites the research's "positive correlation between individual psycho-social and socioeconomic circumstances and risky behaviour." The International Telecommunication Union developed its indicators and national strategy guide (*Child Online Protection*) for 192 countries, noting "there has been little work done in articulating a statistical framework. The main exception is the EU Kids Online Project." The research was heavily cited in Harvard's (2008) report to the Attorney Generals of the US, *Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies* and is the mainstay of the European evidence base for the Family Online Safety Institute's industry resource, GRID. Comparisons across place help tailor policy to the cultural context: the EU Kids Online survey (5) was replicated in Brazil, Russia and Australia, and adapted by UNICEF (F), GSMA, Ofcom, NSPCC, EC Safer Internet Programme and others, being cited in policy and practice documents in many countries.

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Implementation

To ensure the policy and public benefits of the research, Livingstone worked closely with numerous stakeholders, presenting findings to the All Party Parliamentary Prevention of Suicide Group, British Chamber of Commerce, Office of the Children's Commissioner, NSPCC, BECTA, BBC, Ofcom, Inter-Ministerial Group on Violence against Women and Girls and diverse companies (e.g. Google, YouTube, BT, Vodafone, Facebook, GSMA).

UK: She served on the *Home Secretary's Taskforce for Child Protection on the Internet* and the Dept. for Education's *Home Access Programme* (2009-10), and its panel, *Assessing the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing* (2009). Ofcom commissioned her for its evidence for the *Byron Review*. She gave evidence to the *Culture, Media and Sport Committee* (2008) whose report led to UKCCIS (H). Livingstone is the UKCCIS Evidence Champion, Executive Board Member (2009-) and founding Evidence Group chair. She is on the Advisory Board, UK's Safer Internet Centre, and CEOP Command Strategic Group (National Crime Agency).

EC/International: Livingstone led the EU Kids Online network in advising national and European stakeholders – notably, UNICEF, ITU and OECD - and presenting the research on multiple occasions at the EC's Safer Internet Forum, European Commission, European Parliament, Swedish Presidency of the EU, Insafe, Internet Governance Forum, Family Online Safety Institute, World Summit on Media for Children and Youth, among others.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

All Sources listed below can also be seen at: [https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case\\_study/view/82](https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case_study/view/82)

(A) Byron, T. (2008) *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review*. DCSF/DCMS. [includes 39 references to the research]

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00334-2008.pdf>

(B) UKCCIS industry codes on social networking, moderation, search, chat and parental controls. [6 references] <http://www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/groups/a0075834/self-regulation-of-industry>

(C) UKCCIS (2011) *Advice on Child Internet Safety 1.0: Universal guidelines for providers*. <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/ukccis%20advice%20on%20child%20internet%20safety.pdf> [9 references]

(D) EC (2012) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions: European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children*, COM (2012) 196 final. [7 references]

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0196:FIN:EN:PDF>

(E) OECD (2011) *The Protection of Children Online: Risks faced by children online and policies to protect them*, OECD Digital Economy Papers, No 179. [20 references] [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/the-protection-of-children-online\\_5kgcif71pl28-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/the-protection-of-children-online_5kgcif71pl28-en)

(F) UNICEF (2012) *Child Safety Online: Global challenges and strategies*. Florence. [34 refs] <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/650>

(G) Protecting Children in the Digital World COM (2011) 556 final, at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0556:FIN:EN:PDF>

(H) Millwood Hargrave, A., and Livingstone, S. (2008). *Evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee: 'Harmful Content on the Internet and in Video Games'*.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcmums/353/353ii.pdf>

Individuals

- Director for Media Policy, Strategy and Change, DCMS (for UKCCIS)
- Member of Cabinet, for Neelie Kroes, Vice President of the European Commission.
- Secretary of the Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety; EU Alliance for Child Safety Online.
- Head of European Public Policy, Facebook.
- Advisor to PM Brown, author of *Safer Children in a Digital World*