

PARENTS FAILING TO MONITOR CHILDREN'S INTERNET ACTIVITY

Submitted by: Thorburn Media

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- 84% of parents rely on verbal agreements to ensure their children 'surf safely'
- 45% of children use chatrooms to make new friends
- 40% use facebook and myspace
- 48% regularly use downloads

The summer holidays are in full swing as millions of children across the UK have broken up from school. More time at home means more time spent on facebook, chatting to friends online and downloading music – but are parents actually monitoring what their children are doing online?

According to a survey* from BroadbandChoices.co.uk, the answer is a resounding “No.” The research found that 84% of parents across the UK said they rate verbal agreement with their children as their number one way of monitoring online activity. The poll also asked children aged 11-16 what they spent the most time doing online during the school holidays which revealed that 48% download music, 45% use chat rooms to make new friends online and 40% use social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

These results have child safety implications as well as legal and financial ones. They are particularly significant in light of the government's announcement that parents are to be punished if their child downloads music and films illegally. Households can be blacklisted and have their internet access curbed or suspended if they do not follow the rules, meaning parents will be forced to take stronger measures to supervise their child's online activity.

Michael Phillips, Product Director, BroadbandChoices.co.uk, said:

“We were surprised to learn that such a high proportion of parents heavily rely on verbal agreements to ensure their children's online activities are safe and legal. Children are often more tech-savvy than their parents and the click of a mouse can take them anywhere. This research highlights the need for parents to be aware of the simple checks they can put in place to safeguard children who are increasingly using the internet to build new relationships.

“As well as the possible safety issues, there are financial implications to your child's internet activities. With 48% downloading music online it would be easy to exceed your broadband fair usage limit leaving unsuspecting parents out of pocket at the end of the month.”

BroadbandChoices.co.uk recommends the following steps to help busy parents effectively monitor their child's online activity:

1. Parental control software: Some ISPs like AOL and BT offer parental controls as part of their service, while other users can get them with their antivirus and security suites. Parental controls allow you to block certain sites and keywords, apply different settings for different age groups and monitor your child's online activity. You can also use the Messenger Plus! program to keep a log of conversations they might be having using Instant Messenger.
2. Education: Completely banning older children from the Internet is unlikely to stop them from using

chatrooms and social networking sites, so instead, explain why they need to be careful on the Internet and make sure they know never to give out personal information or meet strangers without an adult around.

3. All on one PC: Keeping the family computer in the living room is a great way of ensuring that your children stay safe online. They're far less likely to spend time in chatrooms or downloading illegally if their parents are in the same room. Also, make sure that you're set as the administrator on any PC in the home, so that only you can change the settings on your parental control software.

4. Antivirus and firewall software: Using security software to protect your PC will also protect your child from spam emails with inappropriate content, and phishing emails where they could give out personal information including bank details.

5. Monitor downloads: If you're concerned about the affect your children's downloading is having on your monthly usage allowance, use a Download Monitor such as ours to keep an eye on downloads and set alarms to alert you when you near your limit.

BroadbandChoices.co.uk's download monitor can be accessed at <http://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk/broadband-download-monitor.html>

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*Survey carried out by YouGov in September 2007

Notes to editors

For further information please contact:

Michael Phillips
ConsumerChoices.co.uk
Tel: 020 7700 3245

Gug Kyriacou/ Karen Wagg
Polhill Communications
Tel: 020 7655 0550/0540

About BroadbandChoices.co.uk: <http://www.BroadbandChoices.co.uk>

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What makes BroadbandChoices.co.uk different:

- Broadband comparison calculator accredited by Ofcom (one of only two accredited UK services)
- Most comprehensive range of broadband consumer guides and advice
- Variety of ways to rank and compare broadband packages according to individual needs
- Detailed package information on over 100 UK broadband packages
- A community of like-minded people where you can read reviews and share your thoughts
- Up-to-date information regarding key industry developments
- Access to practical free, downloadable software tools (speed tester & download monitor)