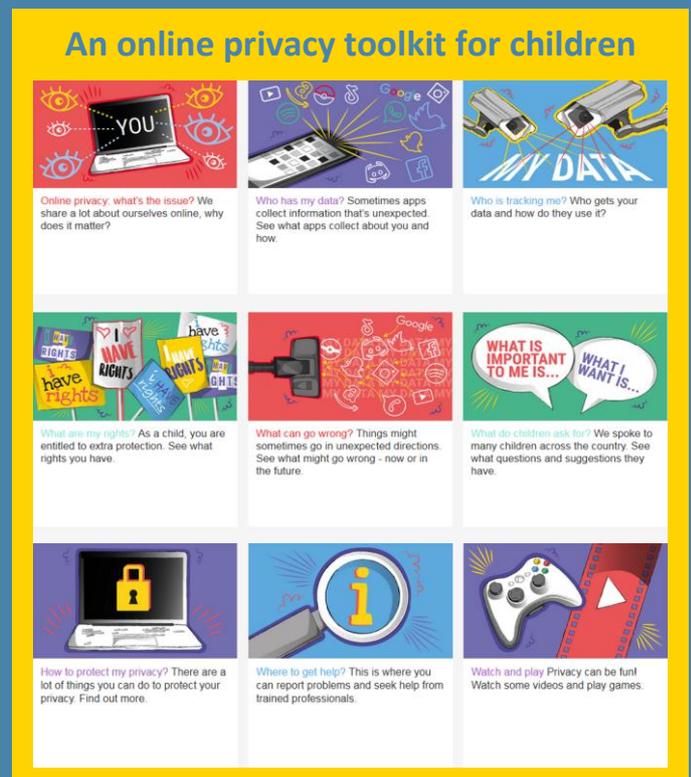




Children's data and privacy online: a brief for policy-makers

- ❖ Children experiment with new technologies, often ahead of adults. They may **encounter risks before we know** about them.
- ❖ Children's activities are increasingly subject to **new forms of data collection and surveillance** by all kinds of companies and by the state (including school, health, police, etc.).
- ❖ The digital environment is getting more complex, and we don't know the **long-term consequences of a 'datafied world'**.
- ❖ Our research shows that children **care about their online privacy** and try out tactics to keep control over their devices and personal information.
- ❖ But children's tactics aren't always successful, and children who act as if they don't care about their privacy may not understand **the potential for harm**.
- ❖ There is **no 'magic' age of competence** but children do learn more about privacy as they grow older, and they want to know more.
- ❖ Children **struggle to grasp** the relation between privacy, data, and online activities. They **focus on data they know they give**, not the data that are taken automatically or inferred. They doubt that companies collect or profit from their data, saying it is 'none of their business.'
- ❖ Children's **media literacy** – especially their critical knowledge of the digital environment – plays an important part in how they can understand, manage and safeguard their privacy.
- ❖ Children hear about interpersonal privacy in e-Safety lessons, but they do not hear about **institutional and commercial** uses of their data.
- ❖ Our online toolkit at **www.myprivacy.uk** – collected with children's input and guidance – explains what they need to know.





What should be done?

- ❖ Child rights-respecting policies must promote autonomy, balance protection and participation, and prevent discrimination and other harms.
- ❖ Distinguish privacy in interpersonal, institutional and commercial contexts, and ensure policies are context-appropriate and clearly comprehensible.
- ❖ Sustained media (data, digital, critical) literacy is vital from an early age – in school curricula and teacher training – but it is not a ‘silver bullet’ solution.
- ❖ Regulate for privacy-by-design and by-default, and provide child-friendly age-appropriate mechanisms for privacy protection, complaint and remedy.
- ❖ Support children by supporting parents, schools and the organisations that work with families and vulnerable children.
- ❖ Sustain a robust evidence base that fills key gaps (e.g. include younger children), evaluates the effectiveness of interventions and consults children.



❖ We spoke to over 160 children in England, Scotland and Wales and some of their parents and teachers.

❖ They all have many questions related to how children's data flows online, how long it is kept and how it is used. They want more and better privacy, security and safety options: greater protection by default and no sharing of their data with others; more age-appropriate online content; and better responsiveness to their concerns and complaints.

❖ Find out more about the research findings at: myprivacy.uk (about)