UK Children Go Online – Focus group schedule 2004

Websites to be discussed in focus groups (include links on UKCGO website)

Definitely show these:

www.need2know.co.uk (DfES)

www.bbc.co.uk/teens (BBC teenage site, pink/blue split)

www.childnetacademy.org (Would it encourage them to set up a webpage?)

www.epal.tv (Connexions Service, see 'Submit your stuff', 'Become a youth consultant')

If time left, also show these:

www.young.gov.uk (youth section of the new Government portal Directgov, see 'Have your say', 'Find your representative', 'What would you do if you were Scotland's First Minister – with £20bn to spend?')

www.rockthevote.org (see Youth as E-citizens report, K. Montgomery)

www.mykindaplace.com (commercial e-zine for girls, has an advice section)

www.monkeyslum.com (mykindaplace equivalent for boys)

www.teentoday.co.uk (teen chat and community site set up by a teenager)

www.dubit.co.uk (company set up by a group of teenagers, see 'Let them know what you think' and 'Companies want to talk to opinion formers')

www.thesite.org.uk (popular personal adivce site)

Others:

www.cypu.gov.uk/youth/index.cfm (boring website for young people by the Children's and Young People's Unit, 'This is your chance to have your say and really influence the Governments plans to create better services for children and young people all over England.')

www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc (BBC children's site)

www.websafecrackerz.com (games and info around online safety)

www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk (boring site of the UK Youth Parliament)

www.childrens-express.org (young people's news agency, no possibility to submit stories)

http://student-voices.org (project by the Annenberg Public Policy Center encouraging the civic engagement of young people through education)

www.michaelmoore.com

www.developingcitizenship.org.uk/dp_sc.htm (teaching resource about citizenship)

www.nya.org.uk/Templates/internal.asp?NodeID=90728 (info about Local Democracy Week, National Youth Agency website)

www.byc.org.uk (British Youth Council)

http://web.ask.co.uk/uk?q=how+do+I+make+a+personal+homepage&qsrc=0&o=0&rb=1 (Search results for 'How do I make a personal homepage')

www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2 (BBC educational resource on 'WW2 People's war')

www.youngscot.org (p (Scottish youth information portal for 12-26 year olds)

www.talktofrank.com (personal advice site about drugs)

www.there4me.com (NCPCC personal advice site)

(1) Introduction

- We would like to know whether the internet is something more than entertainment or help with school work. Does it give you a chance to contribute your own ideas, or join in with public debate, or express yourselves so that lots of other people can hear your opinions? Is it a new source of advice and help for young people? We've been talking to some of the people making different kinds of websites for young people - from government, from business, from young people's organisations - and they are really hoping that they can design the kind of material that you'd like on the internet, that would give you a chance to benefit, and join in. But, now we are to get an idea from you about what young people themselves might want, since there are many people putting money and effort into this.

- Get general views at this point.

- We'd like to show you some of the sites out there. Perhaps you have some good sites to show us also? If so, let's see these first.

(2) Research questions to consider

- Examine interactivity closely – how do they respond to the various appeals (to send an email, to have their say, becoming a certain kind of person (what), joining peers, to join a community, to reach an elite figure, etc) – how do they evaluate the interactivity on offer (do they ask whether their contribution will be noticed, valued, replied to; do they expect/want a clearer payoff – feedback on who replies, on how engagement results in a benefit to society or directly to those who participate, etc).

- Examine participation carefully: If they participate, what do they think they are participating in exactly, and how do they value that? Do the sites live up to their promise, indeed, what do they promise as the kids see it? How do they envisage the links to political elites/processes? Who do they think is listening, what happens to their contributions, what feedback/consequences would they most like, and what do they expect in practice?

- What makes some but not all go from just information to interacting/contributing – is it a matter of design, of fears, of purpose, etc?

- Distinguish between being told to go to such sites (eg by school, parents) and choosing it oneself

- What kids might like about the sites – the fact that they can visit anonymously, with low commitment, or do they want commitment, to exercise rights without being expected to take on responsibilities?

(3) Questions to the kids

- <u>Initial reactions:</u>
    - Do you know the site?
    - What do you think of it? What do you like (or don't like) about it? Why?
    - (Observe how they go about exploring it. Which parts do they pay attention to, which parts do they read, which links do they follow?)
    - What purpose do you think this site is for?
    - For what purposes could you use the site – for information, for interaction, to contribute, to mobilise?

- Where do the sites lead (or could lead)? Do they take you on a journey, open up new possibilities, or do they keep you on site? Do they mainly promote activities online or offline?

- What do you think will happen if you click/respond/email etc? What would you like to happen?

- In what ways does the site surprise or disappoint you?

- Do you know similar/ better sites?

- Trustworthiness:

  - Who do you think has set it up? Why?

  - Do the sites make clear who funds them, what their purposes are, etc (eg Rock The Vote funded by MTV)? Is this transparent?

  - Would you trust the site? Why (not)?

  - What is important to make a site (look) trustworthy?

  - Do you think young people have been involved in setting up this site?

  - Would it be better/ would you trust it more if they had?

- Identity/selfhood consequences of participation:

  - What kind of person do you think is this site for?

  - What would it say about them if they engaged with it?

  - How would their friends regard them?

  - (Recall that teens struggle to be both distinctive/individuated and accepted/normative to peers.)

- Lack of interest:

  - Is it that you're not in interested in such websites or that you're not interested in such issues in general (even offline)?

  - Does/could the internet make a difference? If not, what would?

  - Are they apathetic about all sites, all interests, or is it something specific about participation – compare advice, content creation and political sites.

- Explore the term 'politics':

  - Why is it boring, negative etc?

  - Is this about shame (peer group pressure) or about identity (only nerds do politics)?

  - Who finds political participation interesting?

  - Is it the performance of politics that's unattractive (not glossy, nerdy, hierarchical, a space where you are not listened to, full of jargon, approved of by parents)?

  - How much should young people be involved in politics?

  - Why (to practice and develop skills for when they are 18, or because young people's voices matter now, or because it is wrong that they are neglected and misunderstood, or what?)?

(3) At the end of the interview

- Ask about the value (as they see it) of the internet for these purposes.

- Who do you think should be producing these sites? (public/commercial, adult/youth, etc)

- Do you think this should be different for personal advice sites, political sites or youth sites?

- How could it be improved etc and who should do it?

- Who would benefit from hearing your views?

- Would it matter if these sites did not exist? Are you glad someone is making them?

- What kind of world would it be if no one wanted to get young people active?

- Do you have other places to go with your interests/concerns/energies? Where else would you turn to organise/get advice/be heard, etc – community spaces, face to face meetings, letters to the newspaper, youth magazines, etc?

- Link to their citizenship curriculum - is this all a matter for schools or not? See http://www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/citizen/targets.htm: *At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils…*

> - *"have a broad knowledge and understanding of the topical events they study; the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens; the role of the voluntary sector; forms of government; provision of public services; and the criminal and legal systems*
>
> - *"show how the public gets information and how opinion is formed and expressed, including through the media; and how and why changes take place in society*
>
> - *"take part in school and community-based activities, demonstrating personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and to others."*

Interview schedule for primary school kids: Design a website for your school

Materials:

Large paper pad (from flip chart), Post-it notes in different sizes and colours, marker pens in different colours, digital camera

Introduction:

Researcher sticks Post-it with "School websites" written on it on the top of the sheet of paper to demonstrate how to do it (i.e. write/draw an element of the website on a Post-it note (e.g. link, picture, text etc.) and stick it on the page, they can be moved around and changed later), explaining that they can change the name of the website to something different and more interesting but not use their schools real name because we might show their design to someone else

Post-it notes:

I think it is better to use Post-it notes than to ask them to write/draw directly onto the paper as it saves time not having do decide who draws what and where. If they don't like what they draw at first, it can easily changed and moved around.

Possible elements: (Let them develop their own ideas first, then suggest other elements; explore each element separately, see notes below.)

About the school:

       Pictures *(What should/ should not be on the pictures? Are they aware of who might see them? Are they aware of the policy not to identify children on photos?)*

       Space to display school projects *(Who is the site for? Would they like a wider audience to see what they're doing at school?)*

       Info on partner schools *(Explore global reach of websites)*

       Separate sections for children/ teachers/ parents *(Explore different interests of each group)*

About the local community:

       Local news/ events *(Are they interested in what's going on in their local area?)*

       Info on their local area/ town/ city

Communication:

       Chat

       Instant messaging

       Email

       Explore safety issues

       Would this be for everybody or just school community?

       Do they already use this elsewhere?

School work:

       Search *(Explore problems with searching and if they have been taught it)*

       Help/ "Ask a teacher" *(Do they already use such services on other sites?)*

Entertainment:

       Games

       Quizzes

       Competitions

Jokes

Fun activities

Should they be part of a school website or would they just distract from school work?

Other:

Design *(Do they want bright colours/sound/animation or a plain but functional site?)*

Security, Log-in *(Explore their awareness of online safety)*

Adverts *(Do they mind/ notice adverts on the web? Which companies would they like to sponsor their school?)*

Links *(Explore what their favourite sites are)*

Website team (*Who should be involved in building it?*)

Note 1: This school's website is offline at the moment so can't be incorporated into the focus group.

Note 2: This school recently had online safety training.

At the end:

Take a photo of the website design in case Post-it notes fall of during transport.

References:

Large, A., Beheshti, J., Nesset, V., & Bowler, L. (forthcoming). Designing Web Portals in Intergenerational Teams: Two Prototype portals for Elementary School Students. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (JASIST).*

Large, A., Beheshti, J., Nesset, V., & Bowler, L. (2003, May). Children as Web Portal Designers: Where Do We Start? In W. C. Peekhaus & L. F. Spiteri (Eds.), *Bridging the Digital Divide: Equalizing Access to Information and Communication Technologies. Proceedings of the 31st Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Information Science, Dalhousie University, 30 May - 1 June 2003* (pp. 139-152). Halifax: CAIS.

Additional info

Rock the Vote

Could a website like this work in the UK to get more young people to vote and get engaged?

Rock the Vote was established by music industry leaders to engage youth in the political process. It is best known for its work to organize voter registration drives, get-out-the-vote events, and voter education efforts for young adults. But its web mission is wider, as its boldly colored, Flash-enhanced website makes clear.

The interactive menu featured at the top of every web page offers a spectrum of options: "Action," "Issues," "Programs," "Street Team," "Donate," "RTV Blog," "RTV Gear," and, of course, "Register to Vote." "Register to Vote" links to a voter registration form that visitors can fill out and send to their state elections office. **Rock the Vote** uses the slogan, "Fill it and print it, lick it and mail it," to describe the process. A section of the site called **"Chicks Rock, Chicks Vote!"** focuses on young women. It provides links related to women's issues and activism, a "Government 101" fact sheet, and quotes from "women who rock."

The "Action" section spurs young people to take political and social action on "the issues you believe in." The page links to six issues -- free expression, violence, environment, education, economy, and debt -- where a paragraph highlights the problem and invites young people to take a stand. Minimal background information is provided, but for each issue links to activist organizations are supplied.

Rock the Vote keeps alive its roots in popular culture with "Community Street Teams." These teams of young people set up voter registrations stands at concerts and community events; visitors to the website are invited to join. **Rock the Vote** also partners with popular musicians to promote its cause, recently enlisting the Dixie Chicks in an effort to persuade young people, particularly young women, to register to vote in time for the 2004 election. The site also accommodates online donations and sells official **Rock the Vote** merchandise, from t-shirts to a RTV thong.

(http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/ecitizens/rtv.htm)

Need2know

The Need2know website provides access to a wide range of information for young people on subjectsas diverse as health and relationships, facts about law, travel advice or even money issues. The site gives 13-19 year-olds the information they want, when they want it.

(http://www.dfes.gov.uk/deptreport2004/showcase/need2know.cfm)

The key objectives of the portal are:

- to provide an electronic 'one stop shop' for sign-posting information and services from private and public sector organisations

- to bring together everything that young people want and need to know from government in user friendly language

- to change the way government departments think about and respond to young people's needs and to change how government communicates with young people

- to make the democratic process more effective by encouraging young people to take an interest in what government does and how it affects them by building that relationship

(Source: DfES Young People's Portal Research and Involvement Programme)

Epal

The epal project is based on the creative use of new media and technologies, combined with innovative approaches to the design and delivery of public services, to produce a unique resource for 13-19 year olds in Greater Manchester. It is an electronic information service, fronted by an electronic personal assistant, which creatively combines contributions by young people for young people; information, advice and guidance for young people; opportunities for consultation, dialogue, and participation with a range of public and voluntary sector agencies; and opportunities for young people to develop their skills and knowledge both electronically and in face to face settings.

The primary aim of epal is to provide a multi-channel electronic platform through which a virtual community of young people can access information and services useful to them, supported by a virtual community of specialist agencies; and through which young people can also participate in the ongoing design and development of those services, and in contributing their own content.

The objectives of epal are to:

- contribute, alongside more traditional ways of doing things, to improved outcomes for young people, measured in terms of their capacity to negotiate the risks and challenges of teenage life,

- maximise their opportunities for personal and social development;

- gain achievements in terms of informal and formal education;

- and achieve a successful transition to adulthood.

It is also, through innovative and creative means, to exploit the potential of new technologies for supporting and promoting the wider participation of young people as citizens, in social and political life.

(Source: Greater Manchester Connexions, epal conference description)