THE ROLE OF MOBILE PHONES IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Kerry Devitt and Debi Roker

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Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA)
23 New Road
Brighton
BN1 1WZ
UK

www.tsa.uk.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The background to this research was work undertaken by one of the authors and a colleague into how ‘monitoring and supervision’ works in families (Stace and Roker, 2005). A key finding from this research was the role of mobile phones in communications between young people and parents, in relation to young people’s whereabouts, activities, and safety. However, this issue was not explored in any depth in the previous study. TSA therefore secured a grant from the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and the GSM Association (GSMA) to explore the role of mobile phones in family communication in more detail. The aims of the study were as follows:

• How are mobile phones used in communication between parents and young people in families? For example - how often are they used? Who initiates this contact? What issues or topics are raised? Thus the study aimed to describe the role of mobile phones in family communication in general.

• What factors influence how mobile phones are used in family communication? For example, how do the patterns of mobile phone interaction (above) vary by key factors such as gender (of parents and young people), family type (single versus two-parent households), culture and ethnicity, socio-economic status, locality, etc? Thus the study aimed to identify the key influences on different patterns of mobile phone use in families.

• How are mobile phones used to keep young people safe? How do parents monitor young people’s whereabouts and activities using mobile phones? How do young people use their phones to let their parents know about their whereabouts, or any changes in their plans? How are mobile phones used when young people are having difficulties, or in emergencies? Thus the study aimed to identify strategies that parents and young people have to use mobile phones to keep young people safe.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

A qualitative methodology was used in the study. Individual interviews were undertaken with one young person and one/two of their parents, involving 60 families in total. The individual interviews explored communication and relationships in the family, focussing on the role of mobile phones in this, in particular in relation to monitoring young people’s safety. In addition, each participant was asked to complete a daily diary, detailing their mobile phone use, over the same seven day period.
MAIN FINDINGS

Family relationships, and monitoring and supervision arrangements in general (which provide the context to the research)

- Communication and relationships were described in positive terms by parents and young people. Both groups also identified a change with age, with the older age-groups (14 and upwards) spending more time socialising and communicating with friends and peers.
- Young people in rural areas were found to spend more time in the family home, compared to urban young people. Rural young people felt they had less opportunities for leisure and socialising.
- Young people generally kept their parents informed about where they were going and what they were doing. For the younger age groups this was for safety, and for the older ages more of a courtesy to the parents, in case they were worried.
- Young people generally were trusted by their parents. The only exception to this was when a young person had previously lied to a parent.
- Parents were worried about their young person’s safety in relation to a number of factors, including street violence, being kidnapped, and risks from substances.

How do young people use their mobile phones?

- Almost all parents described initially purchasing, or letting their child have, a mobile phone for one of two reasons. Either because young people asked for one, or because of young people’s growing independence; this was particularly associated with the move to secondary school.
- Most young people had pay-as-you-go (also known as pre-paid) mobile phones. This gave them control over how much they were spending. Some young people paid their own bills, whilst in other families parents covered the costs.
- Young people used their mobile phone with parents to make arrangements, inform them of changed plans, and deal with any emergencies. They used phones with friends to socialise and make friends.
- Young people had mixed views about the privacy of their mobile phone. A minority did not mind parents seeing the contents of their mobiles. For a majority of young people, however, their mobile was viewed as their private space. They felt particularly strongly that parents should not view the messages or call histories on their mobiles.

How are mobile phones used in communication, and monitoring and supervision?

- Mobile phone use between parents and young people was mainly in terms of planning and arrangements. However, both parents and young people talked about the importance of mobiles being available for emergencies.
Monitoring using the mobile was seen by parents as effective and essential. However, parents did highlight problems with mobile use – including young people not hearing their phone, not charging it, or deliberately not answering their phones.

Parents preferred to speak to young people on their mobiles. This was because they found it reassuring to talk directly to young people, and hear their voice. Most young people, however, preferred to text.

Most young people considered that their parents were not very competent in using mobiles, particularly in relation to texting (short-term messages, or SMS). This was more so for mothers than fathers.

Most parents saw the phone as their child’s own personal property and said they had never checked or looked at their phone. It was often described as like a ‘diary’, and therefore viewing it would be an invasion of privacy. A small number of parents did view their child’s mobile phones, sometimes with and sometimes without their consent. This was most common when parents were concerned about their child’s behaviour or activities.

Parents also commented that they would not take their child’s phone away as a punishment. It was felt that doing so could affect young people’s safety.

Parents saw young people’s mobile phone as primarily the child’s responsibility or as a joint responsibility with parents, particularly in relation to paying for it. This strategy was often described in terms of helping young people develop responsibility and independence.

Benefits of using mobile phones

Young people

For young people, the main benefits of using mobile phones were: ease of communication, safety, and independence. In addition young people mentioned: social reasons, parents being reassured, and keeping in contact with distant family.

Young people felt they could do more, and felt safer, due to having their mobile phone.

Whilst it did not apply to a large number, mobiles were used by some young people to have conversations they could not have at home – for example with a non-residential parent or estranged relative.

Most young people also thought that an additional benefit of mobile phones was that parents were less worried about them. This was particularly true for girls.

Parents

For parents, the primary benefits of using the mobile phone to monitor and supervise their children were: ease of communication with their child, a safety measure for the child, peace of mind for parents, and independence for the child.

Mobile phones were seen to ease communication within families, and allayed worry on the part of the parents.
Concerns about using mobile phones

- Parents and young people talked about similar concerns about using mobile phones. The main areas raised were: theft and mugging, bullying and ‘happy slapping’ (an unpleasant incident recorded and circulated by mobile phone), expense, media and peer pressure, and health risks.
- Parents and young people in urban areas were more worried about muggings and theft compared to those in rural areas, usually because of their direct experience of it.
- A third of the young people had experienced some kind of unpleasant incident with their mobile phone, such as bullying or happy-slapping. A third more reported it occurring to someone they knew. Parents were much less concerned about the issue.
- Most young people felt there was peer and media pressure to have the ‘right’ phone. Those from lower income families in particular commented on the difficulties of keeping up with their peers in this way.
- Young people and parents were unsure about the long-term health risks of mobile phones. However, both parents and young people said they tried to reduce any potential risk through limiting the amount of time spent on the mobile phone.
- Parents also identified two further concerns about young people’s mobile phone use – the possibility of communication with strangers, and making their child generally less communicative.

Social influences on mobile phone use

- Gender: Girls were described by both genders as the more significant users of mobiles. They were also thought more attached to their phones, particularly for social purposes. The older girls especially reported very strong feelings towards their mobiles, describing them as vital in their everyday lives.
- Age: Parents and young people believed that mobile phones were not suitable for primary school children. They were best suited for older young people (age 11 plus), who were spending more time away from parents. Parents also described giving their child more independence when they had a mobile. The other age related finding was in parents’ use of mobiles - both groups commented on how parents were generally less adept at using mobile phones, particularly in regards to texting.
- Locality: Both young people and parents justified mobile phone use in relation to the area where they lived – rural locations being more remote, and urban locations having higher levels of crime and safety threats.

Young people and internet use

- Both parents and young people talked about the internet in relation to mobile phone use. Young people often used the internet rather than the mobile phone when at home, as it was cheaper, or free.
• Parents and young people also highlighted concerns about internet use – in particular contact with unknown people through chat-sites and friends’ sites. Several parents reported instances where their children had given out personal details, such as home addresses and mobile phone numbers.
• Fathers were particularly concerned about risks from the internet, and were more likely than mothers to check their child’s internet history.

General views: Young people and mobile phones

- Both young people and parents felt that mobile phones enhanced safety. They described mobiles as a ‘lifeline’, and a back-up safety measure. Though a few people did believe there was an increased risk in terms of mugging and bullying, most felt the benefits outweighed the negative points.
- The majority of parents did not feel that extra risks were taken by young people as a result of having mobile phones. The general consensus was that if people were going to take risks, they would do so regardless. A few described mobile phones as providing a ‘false sense of security’, but most considered mobile phones to be a positive influence.
- Young people felt considerable pressure to have mobile phones in general, and to have the ‘right kind’ of mobile.
- Overall, both parents and young people were wholly for young people having mobile phones. Safety came out as the top reason (including peace of mind for the parents), followed by ease of communication, independence, and for young people, social reasons – i.e. keeping up with friends.

Findings from the seven day ‘personal records’

- The results of the personal records generally supported the findings from the interviews with young people and parents.
- The younger age groups (11-12 year-olds) did not use their mobiles very often to communicate with parents during the course of the week.
- By age 13-14, there was much more ‘checking in’ between parents and young people using mobiles, particularly by girls. This pattern continued with the older age groups (15-17 year-olds) who also used their mobiles as a key part of their social lives.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- This research has provided new and useful findings about the role of mobile phones in family communications, particularly in relation to safety.
- The findings from this study could be translated into materials for parents. This could include short ‘information sheets’ for parents, including ‘hints
and tips’ that parents in the study described, focussing on keeping young people safe whilst out of the home, and while using mobile phones.

- The research could be used to produce educational materials for young people. These could focus on how young people can use mobile phones more safely, and how young people can keep themselves safe and reduce risk. These materials could be in the form of a guide, and could be used by practitioners in schools, colleges, youth settings, etc. They could include, for example, the comments from young people in the research about ‘safe phone’ behaviour, including non-conspicuous use, not using mobiles for too long, telling parents and/or school about bullying texts, etc. These hints could be built into discussions, role plays, and exercises, bringing the research to life for use in the classroom.

- The findings also raise questions for future research. These include:
  - The research has described patterns of mobile phone communication between young people and their parents. The research also hinted at a range of issues in mobile phone communication between young people and their friends – this has not been explored using qualitative methods. A key area for future research is how young people use mobiles to communicate and maintain friendships and romantic relationships.
  - There is little information available about how young people use their mobiles to get information and advice, for example in relation to practical issues (such as careers information) or more sensitive issues (such as sexual health advice). This is an important area for future research.
  - This study explored patterns of mobile phone use retrospectively, by asking young people about their patterns of use. In addition, however, the authors used a diary methodology, to look at the realities of mobile phone use over the course of seven days. *It is considered that a more detailed study of mobile phone use over time, using a broader range of methodologies, would be useful.* This could include, for example, diaries completed over a one month period, or using texts to prompt young people to record their mobile phone use over the last 24 hours. This would provide much more detailed information than is currently available about the realities of young people’s mobile worlds.
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- All the parents and young people who participated in the research, and who were so open and honest with their views and experiences. Also we would like to thank all the many organisations and individuals who helped us gain access to the families. We cannot identify them individually here, as we promised them anonymity. However, we are extremely grateful to all of them.

- Debbie Fallon for assistance with interviewing some of the families.

- Caroline Dewey and Katie Marsh at TSA for administrative support.

- The Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and GSM Association (GSMA) for providing a grant to undertake the research.

NOTE: The research described in this report represents the views of the authors and TSA only.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This section briefly introduces the research, by describing the literature in this area, and the previous Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA) study which highlighted the need for more research.

1.1 TSA’s research into ‘monitoring and supervision’ in families

The aim of the project described in this report was to better understand the role of mobile phones in family life. The specific focus was on families containing young people aged 11-16, and how mobiles are used as a means of communication with parents, particularly as part of keeping safe.

The idea for the study emerged from a project recently completed by the author and a colleague, Stephanie Stace. This study looked at ‘monitoring and supervision’ in families, and was funded by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see Stace and Roker, 2005). The results of this have recently been published as a book, and as training materials for those working with families.

A notable finding from this study was that mobile phones are a key feature of modern day communication within families. In particular, mobiles were seen as central to parents and young people keeping in contact, and of keeping young people safe. As will be demonstrated later in this section, there is little information about the role of mobile phones in family relationships in the UK. In addition, mobile phone use was only one of many issues to emerge in the study, and it was not possible to explore it in any great depth. The issue of mobile phone use and safety has, however, proved to be of considerable interest to researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers. It was therefore considered to be a topic worthy of further investigation. It is for this reason that TSA secured funding from the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and GSM Association (GSMA) to undertake research into this issue.

The aims of the research are described later in this chapter. First, however, the existing research into the topic is described.

1.2 Young people and mobile phones: what do we know?

There is a growing literature on the role of technology in the lives of young people and families. Much of it focuses on use of the internet (for example Holloway and Valentine, 2001; Kerawalla and Crook, 2002; Livingstone and Bober, 2002; Holloway and Valentine, 2003). In relation to health issues and technology, much of this focusses on the possible links between mobile telephones and cancer.
In comparison with this literature on young people’s use of the internet, there is not a great deal published on patterns and experiences of young people’s and/or the family’s use of mobile phones. One of the main researchers in this area, the Norwegian researcher Richard Ling, has looked at various aspects of mobile phone use in modern day situations. Some of the areas explored are the use of mobile phones in inappropriate situations (Ling, 1997, 2002, 2004a), how teenagers use mobile phones in their day-to-day lives, particularly in terms of forging and maintaining tight social relationships (Ling, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b), and how families and parenting has been affected by the mobile revolution (Ling, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2004b).

More recent research has been conducted by Lemish and Cohen (2005). These authors have made some interesting observations about how mobile phones fit in with family relationships, specifically the parent-child relationship. Through interviews with 105 child-parent pairs, it was found that mobile phones encouraged independence and personal growth, and that parents and young people viewed the mobile phone positively in terms of personal safety, and connectedness. Further, young people did not feel that having a mobile phone increased potential parental control.

Other international research has been more limited in scope. For example, a Canadian study into mobile phone use (Campbell, 2006) involved the analysis of advertising in relation to mobile phones, and interviews with 11 girls aged 14-16. Interestingly, Campbell identifies three types of discourse in relation to mobile phone use amongst girls – first a media discourse that emphasizes image and independence, second a parental discourse that focuses on danger and safety, and third a youth discourse that emphasizes self-determination, privacy, and sociability. In the context of the current research, Campbell proposes that many parents see mobiles as a ‘digital leash’. However, the very limited sample size, and the fact that no males were interviewed, makes it difficult to generalise from this study.

Gender and mobile phone use is highlighted in studies by Lohan (1997) and Lorente (2002). It was noted that males used mobile phones for short calls and functional reasons, and women for more personal contacts. Women were also seen to use mobile phones for longer calls than males – the latter preferring more succinct, factual exchanges. Again, though all of these studies offered insights into gender and phone use, there was not an account of how mobile phones were used in other aspects of life.

Another study by Weilenmann and Larsson (2001) explored how young people use mobiles to communicate and socialise. The study involved researchers observing young people’s mobile phone behaviours in naturalistic settings. These authors focussed on young people’s mobile phone sharing behaviours – i.e. turn taking, borrowing/lending, sharing with unknown people etc. However, there is
little detail about this study. It is not clear how many young people were followed or how long the young people were observed.

British research in this area is even more limited, with only three noteworthy studies having been conducted. The first is a study into mobile phone use reported by Haste (2005). This research involved a representative sample of 725 young people aged between 11 and 21. Findings showed that almost all these young people had a mobile phone – 97% of females and 92% of males. Significantly, most described their phones in very positive ways, with many considering them a key part of their lives. Thus, for example, 87% of the females and 68% of the males agreed that ‘having my mobile phone makes me feel safer and more secure’. The majority of the respondents also considered that their parents were less worried about them when they had their mobiles with them. Texting was the most common and preferred mode of using the phone.

The second British study was conducted by YouGov, on behalf of the Carphone Warehouse Group. More than 16,500 British adults were surveyed online to see how mobile phones have affected society, family and relationships, and work. They found that 92% of people used their mobile phone everyday, people aged 18-29 used texts far more than speaking, and generally people felt safer for having mobile phones - mothers in particular describing mobiles as a virtual ‘umbilical-cord’. It was also found that the older age groups (40+) were less competent using mobile phones compared to young people. This was particularly so for mothers. There was a notably low concern about health risks and mobile phone use.

The third UK study of note was a qualitative data. Crabtree, Nathan and Roberts (2003) explored how people use mobile phones in their day-to-day lives. The authors concluded that people mostly viewed mobile phones as a tool, that there has been a rise in ‘considerate communication’, and that modern families use mobiles as tools for household management. There was a particular focus on the benefits of mobile phones in relation to parenting. As the authors state “[Mobiles] allow children to be free of parental supervision and yet allow parents to re-establish control at any time” (Crabtree et al, 2003).

All three studies above, although interesting, have flaws or omissions. The Crabtree et al research is based on only four case studies. There is also little focus in the Haste, or the YouGov studies, on mobile phones in family communications. The Haste study looks exclusively at young people’s use of mobile phones, and does not consider the impact of phones in family communications. Although the YouGov study does look at the role of mobile phones within the family, it does not include those aged under 18. Furthermore, the Haste and YouGov studies were both based on multiple choice and tick box questions. There was little opportunity to understand the context and experiences of those involved. In addition with the Haste (2005) study, the very wide age range (11-25) makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the experiences of secondary school age youth (11-16 year-olds).
Based on the limited information that is therefore available about the role of mobile phones in family life, particularly in the UK, the authors considered it essential that more detailed work was undertaken. The aims of the authors’ research are described below.

1.3 **Aims of the research**

The aims of TSA’s research were as follows:

- *How are mobile phones used in communication between parents and young people in families?* For example - how often are they used? Who initiates this contact? What issues or topics are raised? Thus the study aimed to describe the role of mobile phones in family communication in general.

- *What factors influence* how mobile phones are used in family communication? For example, how do the patterns of mobile phone interaction (above) vary by key factors such as gender (of parents and young people), family type (single versus two-parent households), culture and ethnicity, socio-economic status, locality, etc. Thus the study aimed to identify the key influences on different patterns of mobile phone use in families.

- How are mobile phones used to *keep young people safe*? TSA’s previous study (the ‘monitoring and supervision’ research, above) found that most families saw mobile phones as central to ensuring young people’s safety. Thus, for example, how do parents monitor young people’s whereabouts and activities using mobile phones? How do young people use their phones to let their parents know about their whereabouts, or any changes in their plans? How are mobile phones used when young people are having difficulties, or in emergencies? Thus the study aimed to identify strategies that parents and young people have to use mobile phones to keep young people safe.

The next chapter describes the research that we undertook to address these aims.
CHAPTER 2
SAMPLE AND METHODS

This chapter details the following:

- aims of the research
- research tools
- recruitment methods
- details of the sample
- data analysis.

2.1 Aims of the research

The aims of the research were as follows:

- How are mobile phones used in communication between parents and young people in families? For example - how often are they used? Who initiates this contact? What issues or topics are raised? Thus the study aimed to describe the role of mobile phones in family communication in general.

- What factors influence how mobile phones are used in family communication? For example, how do the patterns of mobile phone interaction (above) vary by key factors such as gender (of parents and young people), family type (single versus two-parent households), culture and ethnicity, socio-economic status, locality, etc. Thus the study aimed to identify the key influences on different patterns of mobile phone use in families.

- How are mobile phones used to keep young people safe? For example, how do parents monitor young people’s whereabouts and activities using mobile phones? How do young people use their phones to let their parents know about their whereabouts, or any changes in their plans? How are mobile phones used when young people are having difficulties, or in emergencies? Thus the study aimed to identify strategies that parents and young people have to use mobile phones to keep young people safe.

2.2 Research methods and tools

A qualitative methodology was used to collect the data in the study. The main method used was individual interviews with one young person aged 11-17 and one/two of their parents (depending on family composition). Details of the
interview schedule are given below. In addition, participants were asked to complete a seven-day diary (with parents and young people completing them over the same period) about their mobile phone use. The details of the research tools are as follows:

**Individual interviews**

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed for use in the study, based on the research questions listed above. The individual interviews covered the following topics:

- Family relationships and communication in general
- Planning in the family in relation to whereabouts and activities
- How mobile phones are used in the monitoring and supervision process, and in communications between young people and parents
- Benefits and concerns of using mobile phones
- Social influences on mobile phone use
- Young people’s Internet use via mobiles, plus use of MSN
- General views: Young people and mobile phones.

The first drafts of the interview schedules were piloted with young people and parents, and questions added and amended as a result. A final version of the interview schedule was then used in the study. The interview guide is included in the appendix to this report.

**Personal records**

The authors created a seven day diary for young people and parents to complete, in order to record their day-to-day experiences of communication and mobile phones. A draft of the diary was produced, and piloted with young people and parents. The diaries included standardised questions, as follows:

- **Young people:**
  - Who did you call/text today?
  - Why did you call/text this person?
  - Who called you today?
  - Why did that person call/text?

- **Parents:**
  - How many calls/texts did you receive from your child today?
  - Why did your child call/text?
  - How many calls/texts did you make to your child today?
  - Why did you call/text?

The diaries were called ‘personal records’ in the research, as previous TSA research has found that young males find the term more acceptable. The personal record layout is included in the appendix to this report.
2.3 Recruitment methods and data collection

Families were recruited to take part in the research through a variety of routes. These included:

- Youth services and organisations (Connexions, Children and Family Forums, youth clubs)
- Youth Offending Teams
- Local authorities
- Black and Minority Ethnic organisations
- Schools and colleges
- Advertising through local newspapers
- ‘Snowballing’ (word of mouth from other families having taken part).

The aim was to secure a diversity of families in terms of family structure, culture and ethnicity, geographic location, rural/urban location, and gender. Once a certain number of families had been recruited to the study, remaining families were recruited to secure a representation by the factors listed.

Families were initially contacted by phone or by letter, and sent further information about the study. Any questions that participants had were then addressed with them. Those families who wished to take part were then contacted for interview. The individual interviews were mainly conducted face-to-face in the family’s home, with a small number undertaken over the telephone. Parents and young people were interviewed individually from each other. In a few cases two parents (mother and father), were interviewed together.

At the end of the interview the researcher explained the structure and process for completing the diaries. Young people and their parents were asked to complete the diaries over the same seven day period, and then to return them to TSA in separate pre-paid envelopes.

Each participant was given a £10 ‘thank-you’ voucher at the end of the research. In addition, participants were sent a summary of the results.

2.4 Details of the sample

In total 60 families took part in the research. In some families, one or both parents took part, and one or two young people. Thus the totals on the pages that follow are greater than 60. The characteristics of the sample, by families in general, and then by young people and parents, were as follows:

Families

Location: Families were recruited from a mix of rural and urban locations, as follows:
Family circumstances: Numbers by family type and living situation were as follows:

**Family type by parental status**
- 16 – divorced or separated
- 7 - single parents
- 36 – couples (30 described themselves as married, 6 as living together)

**Young person's living situation**
- 36 – living with mother and father
- 7 – living with both mother and step-parent
- 14 – living with mother only
- 2 – living with other carers (foster care, kinship care).

**Young people**

67 young people took part in the research altogether, from 60 families. They were characterised as follows:

**Age:** The young people were all aged between 11 and 17. There were:
- Eight – 11-year olds (6 female, 2 male)
- Five – 12-year olds (2 female, 3 male)
- Nineteen – 13-year olds (11 female, 8 male)
- Twelve – 14-year olds (6 female, 6 male)
- Thirteen – 15-year olds (6 female, 7 male)
- Five – 16-year olds (5 females, no males)
- Five – 17-year olds (3 females, 2 males)

**Gender:** 39 girls were interviewed and 28 boys.

**Ethnicity:**
- 58 White British
- 3 Black Caribbean
- 2 White and Black Caribbean / African
- 2 Asian
- 1 White Irish
- 1 Latin American / White

**Religion:**
- 53 no religion
- 9 Christian
- 1 Buddhist
- 1 Hindu
- 1 Muslim
- 1 Jewish
- 1 No answer

**Parents**

In total, 65 parents were interviewed. Their characteristics were as follows:

**Gender:** 53 mothers and 12 fathers

**Ethnicity:**
- 56 White British
- 3 White (Other)
- 2 Black Caribbean
- 2 Asian
- 1 White Asian
- 1 Latin American / White

**Religion:**
- 48 no religion
- 9 Christian
- 3 Jewish
- 1 Buddhist
- 1 Hindu
- 1 Muslim
- 1 Spiritualist
- 1 Pagan

**Personal records**

Of the 60 families involved in the study, 31 parents and 26 young people returned their personal records. This was a return rate of 51.6% for parents and 43.3% for young people, which is a relatively high level of response for this type of (still experimental) methodology. Response rates for parents and young people were as follows:

**Young people:** Personal records were received from 26 young people, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 + 12 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 +14 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents: Personal records were received from 31 parents, as follows by age and gender of children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 +14 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Data analysis

The two types of data collected in the study were analysed as follows:

Individual interviews: All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. These were analysed using the N6 data package for non-numerical data. The main themes were identified and are reported according to themes in the results chapters that follow. Analyses were also undertaken by social factors such as gender and age.

Personal records: These were analysed manually, the analysis focussing on patterns of mobile phone use throughout the week.

Presentation of the results

The results are presented in two chapters, as follows:

- Young people’s views about communication and mobile phones
- Parents’ views about communication and mobile phones

Finally, some general conclusions, implications and ‘next steps’ are identified.

Note that quotes from young people and parents are used throughout the results chapters. These are reported anonymously, with descriptors attached as to the age, gender and part of the country indicated. Any identifying characteristics have been removed.
CHAPTER 3

YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter explores the young people’s views and experiences in the following areas:

- Family relationships
- Planning in the family: Whereabouts and activities
- How young people use their mobile phones
- Benefits of and concerns about mobile phones
- Social influences on mobile phone use
- Mobile phone and internet use
- General views: young people and mobile phones
- Findings from the personal records.

3.1 Family relationships

This section briefly explores the general relationship between young people and parents in the study, independently of the role of mobile phones. This provides the ‘communication context’ for the chapters that follow.

The amount of time young people spent with their parents varied depending on age and geographic location. The younger age groups (11 and 12 year olds), and those who lived in more rural locations, spent more time in the home. The younger children said that they either preferred to spend time with their families, or were limited by how far they could go and what they could do. The young people in the more rural areas described the lack of facilities in their local area as limiting what they could do. The following comments illustrate these points:

“I do [go out] sometimes, but I don’t really like doing that, because I miss my parents.” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“I’m probably [at home] quite a bit. I don’t go out at all much, usually. There isn’t that much to do in the immediate area.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

“I usually get home at about 5.30 or so and then after that I’m just, stay at home most of the evening, and I spend weekends mostly at home with my parents, so I guess I spend quite a lot of time. I’m not sure exactly how much. [My] school is six miles away and most of my friends live in the village where the school is.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)
Those who spent most time out of the home were the older young people (age 15 and over) and those living in urban areas. Socialising with friends was the most common reason for being out of the family home. For example:

“I’m mostly round my friend’s house… I don’t spend much time in at all. I’m always out.” (Male, 15, East Sussex)

Most young people said that they talked regularly to their parents. Day-to-day issues such as school, general activities, plans, arrangements, friendships and relationships were the main discussion areas, with many considering that they could talk at ease on any subject. For example:

“I talk about anything, they don’t like care if I like, they just, if I’m in a bad mood they just help me, right, they don’t shout at me or anything” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“Me and my mum talk a lot. Me and me mum talk all the time.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“I don’t know, I guess it’s ‘cause we’re quite close, we’re quite a close family, so we do speak a lot, we get on well, especially when we’re having dinner, we have a lot of conversations and stuff.” (Female, 16, Manchester)

Communication between parents and young people also changed over time. Some young people felt they spoke more to their parents as they had grown older. Having more to talk about, having the ability to hold deeper conversations, and generally maturing were some of the examples given:

“…when I was little I didn’t have anything to talk about really, it was just about going to the park” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“Growing up, I suppose, different issues that I need to talk about when you get to my age.” (Male, 15, Manchester)

“I’ve grown up since I was little and I used to talk about Peter Pan and stuff. (laughs). Now I just talk about different things.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

Other young people however, talked with their parents significantly less now they were older. This was almost always due to spending more time with friends, and generally developing other close relationships outside of the family:

“…we do talk, but not as much as we used to… probably ‘cause as you get older, you just feel that you prefer to talk to your friends.” (Male, 15, East Sussex)

“I talk to them probably less as I get older, ‘cause I’m out more with my friends that I was probably when I was younger.” (Female, 13, East Sussex)
“When I was younger, I used to talk to my mum, just 24/7, I used to look up to her. But as I’ve grown older, I’ve started talking to my friends more. I’m older. I know a bit more about the world.” (Male, 15, London)

3.2 Planning in the family: whereabouts and activities

This section explores monitoring and communication in the family in relation to plans and arrangements, and participants’ general concerns about safety.

Most young people did tell their parents where they were going and what they were doing. For the younger age groups this was connected to getting permission and being safe. For older young people it was more so that parents knew where they were and what they were doing. ‘Hanging out’ with friends, or attending regular events and sports groups were not seen as activities where young people had to get parental permission. However, special events such as parties or trips out alone, were examples in which parental consent was often sought. For example:

“If I’m going out in the day, I’ll say I’m going out… ‘cause I know it’s fine. But if I’m staying out overnight, then I always ask.” (Female, 16, Devon)

“Say if I was going to Manchester at night to watch a film. I’d need permission to do that. But if it’s just to the park, then no.” (Male, 15, Manchester)

Most of the young people did feel they were trusted by their parents, but a few in the older age groups did have more strained relationships. This was particularly so with those young people who had deliberately deceived parents in the past. As these young people say:

“Yeah, I used to lie. Once, I said I was going to Fareham with my friends and then went to Portsmouth on the train and I wasn’t allowed on the train, and then my friend got run over and the police got called and an ambulance, and then my mum had to come and pick me up. So it’s just easier to tell her.” (Female, 14, Hampshire)

“[Are you trusted when you go out?] Sometimes but not at weekends and sometimes during the week… Because she reckons I might drink or something or might end up getting really drunk or something, cause I’ve done that.” (Female, 15, Hampshire)

Most young people thought their parents did not ask other people about their whereabouts and activities. Some commented on parents phoning their friends’ parents, or asking grandparents or other carers, but there did not appear to be much concern about this. For example:

“Sometimes maybe if I’m going into town, she would call up one of my friends who’s coming with me and just make sure that they’re definitely and
it’s all right with their parents and everything. But that’s all.” (Male, 12, Manchester)

In the interviews we also asked the young people about the risks they faced outside (and that their parents thought they faced) of the home. The main ones were fighting and violence, being kidnapped or attacked by a stranger, traffic accidents, and risks from substances. These concerns are explored further below:

Fighting/violence

This was a concern raised mainly by the young men, particularly those aged fourteen and above, and primarily by young people in more urban locations. For example:

“…Probably fighting. I don’t get into fights, I’m not, sort of, that person, but she’ll [mother] always you know how they do when they say, watch out… don’t get into any fights or arguments or anything… I think that’s what she’s worried about, more than anything.” (Male, 17, East Sussex)

“If I’m in a dodgy area, basically… you know, you see kids hanging around street corners. Sometimes, me and my friend go down to Salford precinct and Mum’s wary about that sometimes.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“People that are older than me. Because the world’s getting a bit crazy and stuff, she is scared for my safety.” (Male, 15, London)

Being kidnapped or attacked by a stranger

All the young people felt that their parents were worried about them being kidnapped or attacked by a stranger. For example:

“They don’t like me going out at night, ’cause sometimes there’s weird people going about.” (Male, 14, Scotland)

“If I was out when it’s dark, they’re worried that somebody might come and get you or something.” (Male, 13, Hampshire)

“That I might get raped or abducted or hurt somehow.” (Female, 17, London)

Traffic accidents

The young people often mentioned traffic accidents as a major concern for their parents. This was most often mentioned by those aged 13 and over, in relation to when young people are out of the home more. For example:
"...my mum worries about me crossing the main road near the park 'cause it's very busy and some people drive through the lights when its "green man" and then my dad ... my dad doesn't really mind ... I think he knows I can cross it safely." (Male, 13, Manchester)

“I'm not generally supposed to walk along the roads round here at night, 'cause there are no pavements and the roads can be quite busy”. (Female, 13, Hampshire)

Alcohol, drugs, smoking

The issue of substances was mostly mentioned by girls, with boys mentioning it less often. There was a clear age pattern in the responses, with those aged 15 and under being the most likely to feel their parents would worry about these issues for them. For example:

“[Mum doesn't trust me] 'cause she reckons I might drink or something or might end up getting really drunk or something... I have done it a couple of times.” (Female, 15, Hampshire)

“more the social issues like drinking, drugs, unprotected sex. That kind of thing.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“...getting really drunk! (laughs) It happened the other week.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

Having outlined the context of young people’s family relationships and communication patterns, the next section details young people’s mobile phone use.

3.3 How young people use their mobile phones

Three main areas are detailed below:

- Phone types and payment responsibilities
- What do young people use their mobile phones for?
- Mobile phones and privacy.

3.3.1 Phone types and payment responsibilities

Pay as you go (PAYG, or pre-paid phones) is a payment scheme whereby credit vouchers are purchased in order to make telephone calls or send text messages. This was the most common arrangement young people had with their mobile phones. Only three of the 60 young people reported having a contract with set monthly bills. Though there were a variety of reasons put forward for having a
PAYG phone, ‘being in control’ was the most common explanation. Many young people feared the unpredictability of the contract phone, and were concerned that they would be unable to monitor their expenditure. For example:

“No I don’t want a contract one because then suddenly it might be like £100 (laughs).” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“I knew that if I got contract when I phone my mates and text then I’d get the bill and my dad he’d go mad.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“That’s why I use pay as you go because if you just put on credit… you’ll never get into debt ‘cause I never wanna be in debt!” (Male, 15, Devon)

Approximately half the young people paid their own bills for their mobile phone, with parents paying for the other group. Many young people kept the costs low as they had to finance their phone themselves:

“Well I don’t use it that much because it’s like my money on it…” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“I pay all the credit on it, yeah … on the house ‘phone, I’d spend an hour talking. But on this [the mobile], I would try and keep it sensibly short … so that I don’t waste too much of my money.” (Male, 15, Devon)

Other young people had a concern about keeping costs down, as their parents were paying. For example:

“Sometimes I worry a bit because I feel I use it quite a lot and my mum or my dad has to top it up, but my credit doesn’t usually run out ‘cause I use it but I don’t spend ages on the ‘phone. I just send texts and if I’m at home, then usually I make a call on the house ‘phone.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“…my dad tries to put a tenner on my phone every month, and sometimes I’m out of credit within the first two weeks. And if that happens, I’ll have to ask for money [that makes me]… a bit guilty, really.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

Although it was not as common, some young people were less concerned about costs as they did not have responsibility for the payments:

“I wouldn’t use it half as much if I had to pay for it.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

3.3.2 What do young people use their mobiles for?

The main recipients of calls or texts made by the young people were friends or parents. The older young people called or texted friends and family much more often than the younger participants.
Mobile phones were mainly used with parents for making plans and arrangements, and in particular for negotiation of plans and activities. This was particularly so in terms of young people requesting to stay out later, getting permission to go to other locations, or asking to be collected. For example:

“I don’t have my ‘phone for any purpose other than just for organising things, really.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)

“I always ‘phone ‘em up if I wanna stay out longer.” (Male, 13, Hampshire)

“I don’t usually use it, really, only when I’m going out with my friends. Then I’ll just ring her when I want her to come and pick us up.” (Female, 11, Hampshire)

Mobile phones were also used as part of maintaining friendships and relationships. Young people rarely used their phones to ‘socialise’ with parents – mobile phone use with parents was usually for a specific purpose. For example:

“No, it’s more chatting [with friends]. If I’m at a party, I’ll tell them where I am and say whether it’s boring or stuff like that. If I’m bored, I’ll text them to say, what are you doing and stuff. But my mum and dad, I’ll probably text them to say where I am or if I’m staying behind at school or if I need a lift or ‘owt like that. Never to just chat.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

Very occasionally, a young person said that they used mobile phones to talk about or raise more sensitive issues. For example:

“Well, I think mobiles can be really good if you’ve got something you don’t wanna tell straight away, like texting my mum that I was getting bullied. You might not wanna say that to her straight out, like.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“I’d maybe text if it’s something that I can’t, I dunno, something I can’t get across and stuff.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

These issues are explored further later in this chapter.

3.3.3 Mobile phones and privacy

In the interviews with young people we explored privacy issues, in particular whether their parents ever looked at texts or messages on young people’s phones. Privacy, especially from parents, was seen as essential, with young people saying that they would be very upset at having their privacy invaded. For example:
“I would be really annoyed. Really, if she didn’t have my permission… It’s kind of like a diary isn’t it. I’d be really annoyed if she looked.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“…it’s my private ‘phone and I don’t want everybody else finding it and just messing about with it and everything.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“No they wouldn’t do that. And if they did, I’d hide it!” (Female, 13, Manchester)

The rule seemed to extend further for some young people, including privacy from the rest of their family. As this brother and sister comment:

“He: In the house we have a strict rule...
Female: We call it a phone offence (laughs) and it’s mainly between us two, if like the other one moves messages or reads the other person’s phone without permission, then it’s a phone offence… there’s not a strict punishment, I think it’s just ….
Male: There is confiscation
Female: Oh there’d be confiscation of their phone…..”

(Female, 16, Manchester – Male, 13, Manchester)

Issues of privacy were also mentioned in relation to phone use generally, with some young people preferring to use their mobile over the landline at home. As these two young men comment:

“[I prefer to use] my mobile ‘phone… because it’s more private [and I can] text.” (Male, 13, Manchester)

“[I use] my mobile ‘phone ‘cause it’s more private. Also I’ve got [free minutes] and you can speak to your mates more … it’s more comfortable really.” (Male, 13, Manchester)

The issue of privacy and mobile phones is returned to later.

3.4 Benefits and concerns about using mobile phones

The young people drew on many examples of where they felt mobile phones could be both an asset, and where they could be a hinderance, or indeed a danger. The benefits and concerns are discussed in turn next.

3.4.1 Benefits of mobile phones

The young people described many positive aspects of having a mobile phone. The three primary reasons were ease of communication, safety, and independence. These are explored in turn below.
One of the main benefits of mobile phones was ease of communication and convenience, being able to quickly negotiate plans, and inform parents of whereabouts. For example:

“I can change arrangements at the last minute and my... when I’m out shopping with friends, I can just call my parents when I’m finished shopping and stuff. It makes things a lot more convenient.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)

“I think it’s very good ‘cause if I’m out somewhere and my plans change or something is cancelled I can just tell them [parents]. And I can tell them when I’m gonna be home. And if they want me to come home straight away, then they can ring me and tell me when they want me home and stuff.” (Female, 13 Manchester)

“It lets me know where she (mother) is, and she knows where I am and plans that are happening and all sorts of things like that.” (Female, 14, Hampshire)

The theme of convenience and speed of contact came up repeatedly in the interviews with young people.

The second commonly cited benefit was independence, with mobiles seen as giving more flexibility in young people’s social lives. Mobiles were seen as a ‘lifeline’, enabling them to stay out later, go further afield, or go to places that parents might be concerned about. As these comments show:

“I wouldn’t be allowed to stay out as late or go as far as I do if I hadn’t had one.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“Cause I’ve got my phone with me, I’m allowed to do more stuff than what [older sister] was allowed to do at her age, ‘cause she didn’t have a ‘phone. I can go to Manchester at this age, but if I’ve got my friends with me and my mobile ‘phone, and [she] couldn’t when she was my age ‘cause she didn’t have that contact with my mum.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

“Well, if I didn’t have my phone with me, my mum wouldn’t really let me go that much, she lets me go more cause I’ve got my ‘phone.” (Male, 14, East Sussex)

The third main benefit of mobile phones was in relation to safety. The young people stressed that phones could be useful in a threatening, difficult, or potentially harmful situation. For example:

“It’s a lot safer if something happens to you ... they [parents] can come and get you.” (Male, 13, Manchester)

“You can contact them wherever you are, you know in an emergency.” (Male, 13, Manchester)
“...if you’re in trouble, you could call the police....” (Female, 15, Devon)

Indeed, a few young people gave examples of when their phone had been used in such a situation:

“I’ve used it to call in [an] emergency three times...There was a time when we were along at the West Pier during the summer holidays, at night. These chavs [a slang term for uneducated, working-class youth] came along and started hitting some people, beating people up, and we had to call an ambulance. And then we called an ambulance just this Saturday for someone. [My friend] was paralytic! And then another time someone got hit by a car.” (Male, 15, East Sussex)

“My friends got really drunk and the police came. [I had to] get my dad down to the police station. I had to phone. My friends couldn’t talk really.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

The young people also talked about the peace of mind that having a mobile phone gave. This was particularly the case with the younger age groups. For example:

“You feel safer. If you’re walking through a dark alley and there’s no houses and something happens you’ve got a mobile...” (Female, 13, Devon)

“I think having a phone makes me feel a safer... so, now, if you’re in trouble, you can just contact someone.” (Male, 11, Devon)

“I feel safer having it with me, just in case there’s an emergency... like an accident had happened or whatever. And if you’d had your ‘phone [you could] speak to anybody...” (Female, 11, Devon)

These three benefits – convenience, independence, and safety – were the main ones described by the young people. Three other benefits were also mentioned – socialising, parents being reassured, and keeping up with distanced family members. These are mentioned briefly below.

Keeping up with friends and acquaintances, and general socialising was mentioned by some young people. Benefits included being able to quickly ‘check-in’ with someone, and easily arrange to meet up:

“I love my friends, I love to talk to them. And I like to know that they’re all right.” (Female, 17, London)

“You don’t have to actually see your friends to speak to them. And if you haven’t seen them for ages, you can just quickly talk to them...” (Male, 13, Devon)

“So you can talk to your mates and invite people to go out and play and stuff.” (Male, 14, East Sussex)
Another benefit of mobile phones, was that parents were less concerned about the young person’s whereabouts and safety, if they had their mobile. Mobiles gave parents (as well as the young person) peace of mind. It was most commonly the girls who described this advantage. For example:

“The biggest thing about having a mobile is my [parent] knows that I’m safe” (Female, 17, London)

“…my parents can call me if they’re worried. It stops them panicking if I don’t turn up somewhere on time.” (Female, 13, Devon)

“I don’t feel like they worry as much is a good thing. ‘Cause I don’t wanna think they’re probably worried… Makes a little less pressure on them, ‘cause they can keep in contact and make sure I’m safe.” (Female, 15, Devon)

“For mum and dad, that eases their worries ‘cause if I’m in a tricky situation (laughs), I can always call…” (Male, 15, Devon)

Finally, a small number of young people mentioned using their mobile phones to keep up with family members who were estranged, or not living with them. This was a benefit of mobile phones raised by only a few young people, but it was significant for this group. The young people talked about being able to privately speak to non-resident parents or estranged relations. This was particularly useful with families where there were tensions between family members. As these young people comment:

“My mum will ring me on my mobile and the rest of my family just ring me on my house ‘phone… because I don’t think my aunt would be happy if she picked up the ‘phone and it was my mum, ‘cause they don’t get on… I don’t think my mum likes my aunt [either] and I felt uncomfortable, so I felt more comfortable speaking to her on the mobile…” (Female, 17, London)

“He [father], when he rings me, he always calls me on the mobile, never the home ‘phone… so, then he doesn’t have to, like, go through my step-dad or my mum to talk to me… Yeah it’s definitely more handy.” (Female, 16, Devon)

There were also further examples of mobile phones being used as a method to simply keep in touch, and stay close to separated families. As these comments show:

“…when I sleep at my dad’s, I always give her [mother] ring on the night.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“…’cause he [father] don’t live in this house, I use it to arrange plans to meet him and stuff.” (Male, 15, London)
3.4.2 Concerns about having mobile phones

Few young people had significant concerns about the use and possession of mobiles. However, everyone interviewed was aware of the potential dangers, and often had first or second-hand experience of a negative event happening. Young people also, however, identified solutions or risk-reducing tactics. The primary concerns were: theft and mugging, bullying and happy slapping, expense, media and peer pressure, and health. These areas are discussed in turn below.

Theft and mugging

Theft and muggings were talked about either hypothetically or from experience. There were clear locality differences in this respect, with young people from the more urban areas having an increased awareness, and more likelihood of experiencing such events. The young people from rural areas were more likely to talk hypothetically. For example:

“It wasn’t me having the mobile ‘phone but my mate was just going in the park, and because he wasn’t very smart about it, he was flashing [his phone] and stuff like that, a guy just came up on his bike, and said “give us your ‘phone or I’m going to batter you” and he was quite a big guy so my friend gave him the ‘phone…” (Male, 13, Manchester)

“Cause if you have a really nice ‘phone and there’s someone, some group or gang that really wants it, then you’re liable to get mugged.” (Male, 15, London)

“I don’t go around flashing my ‘phone, like, showing everybody. Because… like, two of my friends and me got mugged on the bus… there’s people been trying to mug other people.” (Female, 11, London)

“And [if] someone knows you’ve got a £300 ‘phone, they might try and take it from you. So, you’ve got a mobile phone, but you’ve also got the risk, if it’s a really nice mobile ‘phone.” (Male, 11, Devon)

“Well, I think it is a bit of a risk, in that it’s something else for people to steal. We live in a very safe area, a very small village, I don’t think muggings happen much. I think theft of mobile ‘phones is a concern, but I’ve never had any trouble. Probably the greatest concern is losing them.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

Despite these concerns, most young people felt they could reduce the risk of being mugged for their phone. This included keeping their mobile phones in a safe and secure place, not showing off new or expensive phones, and being aware of where and when to use them. For example:

“I don’t see any problem, as long as you keep it out of sight when you’re not using it. I just normally have it in my pocket.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)
“what I know is always keep it in you pocket and always look around before 
you use it and don’t walk round with it on show.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

The young people based in Manchester seemed particularly street-wise in this 
respect, and often attributed their ‘safe phone behaviour’ to experience, and 
through advice distributed by their school and/ or by their parents. For example:

“My mum and dad say [to be careful] and the things that have happened to 
people I know mostly. There was one boy who was mugged or something. 
And just stuff like that.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

“I think its just kind of having friends, and obviously like there’s posters 
around the school saying don’t get your mobile out....” (Female, 16, 
Manchester)

Indeed, young people identified ‘showing off’ as putting some young people at 
risk. For example:

“… the only people who get there mobile phones stolen is those who take 
them out when they’ve got really flashy phones and they’re showing them 
to the whole world, because if you think about it, not many people do that 
and its just like you should just get a normal one until your old enough to 
defend yourself from those people and yeah that’s fine, they’re not going to 
do anything” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

There were only a small number of young people who felt that mobile phones 
increased vulnerability to such incidents. As this young woman points out:

“I think you’re more vulnerable ‘cause people know that young people have 
expensive and up-dated ‘phones and things like that… if they didn’t have 
[mobiles] on them, then I don’t think anyone would mug you ‘cause you 
don’t carry around a lot of money when you’re young, so your ‘phone is the 
only thing that’s really worth robbing.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

In general though, most young people felt that muggings and being robbed were 
part of everyday life, and they were not necessarily more at risk because of 
having a mobile phone. For example:

“Some people want a mobile but some people just want your money. You 
get mugged for anything. You can get mugged for your jewellery, your 
money, if you’ve got a designer bag. Anything at all. If someone wants 
something, then they’ll rob you for it. It don’t matter if it’s a £10 or a three 
hundred quid ‘phone. If they want it, they’ll do it.” (Female, 15, East 
Sussex)
“...if it had money or something, still would have been stolen, it’d be the same thing. It’s just technology going on. I don’t think it’s particularly because of the ‘phones. It just what happens.” (Male, 15 East Sussex)

Bullying and happy-slapping

Almost a third of the young people described an event where they had received an unpleasant call or text message, or had been the victim of phone pranks of some kind. A further third of young people talked about an unpleasant phone-related incident involving someone they knew, or had heard about. Incidents included sending horrible or bullying texts, crank calling people to intimidate or scare, and ‘happy slapping’ – a incident in which an unsuspecting victim is attacked whilst an accomplice records the assault with a camera/video phone. Though some incidents were described as just ‘jokes’ or silliness between peers, others were seen as more worrying. The following comments document the range of these incidents:

“Somebody got my number and was making mean comments, calling me fatso and stuff.” (Female, 11, Hampshire)

“I was getting bullied for about two weeks and people sent me nasty texts… I wasn’t scared because I knew they couldn’t do anything to me, but I just felt really annoyed.” (Female, 13 Manchester)

“I’ve been in class and people have sent round a video of someone being happy slapped and stuff like that…. I know it’s quite common at our school... Like, one day this boy was having a fight with this other boy and this boy filmed it. I thought that was a bit of a horrible thing to do.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“Well, I was down the park one time, and I’ve got this disabled friend, and there was like someone there and they were recording him playing football and they were laughing at him and everything. I thought it was really tight.” (Male, 13, Hampshire)

One young person further reported that they had been part of such an event:

“[I saw someone happy-slapped] I thought it was pretty funny, but if it ever happened to me, then I wouldn’t think it’s really funny.” (Male, 15, London)

Though some young people said that bullying would occur regardless of mobile phones, others felt that the anonymity that mobile phones afforded made some young people a much easier target:

“I’ve received threatening texts and I don’t think that would have happened otherwise.... I think some people wouldn’t actually bully others if they had to actually say something to them face to face” (Female, 13, Hampshire)
“People might text ‘cause they can do it anonymously… it’s easier to be mean, it’s easier to text somebody that do it face to face and have a go at them.” (Female, 13, East Sussex)

There were a number of young people, however, that did not feel affected by this sort of behaviour. For example:

"It just doesn’t seem to happen to me” (Male, 14, London)

"I know it happens, but nobody I know or in my school has had it happen to them, that I know of.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“Sometimes I hear it on [the news] and stuff like that, but if that happened me I would probably tell my mum, or I might try and change my mobile number.” (Female, 11, Devon)

Expense and marketing of mobiles

The expense of mobile phones was a big issue for many young people. The main complaint was not the cost of calls or the price of the phone, but the schemes offered by advertising companies. For example:

“I think it does make it difficult for young people. Money, it is quite a lot because now phone companies are putting the minimum top up to £10, where it used to be £5, so the money is an issue for kids who’s mum or dads won’t put the credit on. They have to put it on [themselves].” (Male, 13, Hampshire)

“I once signed up to get a ring tone and on the terms and conditions, it didn’t say anything about the charges - it said it was free. So I signed up and every text that I sent, they took £2.50 off my ‘phone. So, it took off all my money before I’d even known what was happening.” (Male, 13, East Sussex)

Media and peer pressure

Most young people were very aware of issues of peer pressure, advertising and the media in relation to mobile phones. Many talked about the pressures to have the ‘right’ model, the up-to-date accessories, and keeping up with current trends and styles. As these young people comment:

“[I got a mobile phone] for my birthday. I didn’t know that it was not good, so I took it out and everyone was saying ‘it’s crap’ and everything… so I took it back.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“I’ve definitely got the least flashy ‘phone of all my friends, and a few people have been quite derogatory….” (Female, 13, Devon)
“It’s not just about having a ‘phone, it’s about having a good one. If you’ve got, like, my mum’s (laughs), if I took that into school, everyone would just take the mickey out of me…” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

There was also the issue of financing the phones, particularly when young people felt pressed to have a ‘good’ one:

“I don’t get money for other things, so I try and keep some [for credit] but it’s, like, some people have it. I don’t know. It makes you feel, if you haven’t got the money to do it every week - it makes you feel lesser than they are.” (Female, 16, Devon)

Indeed, money was quite an issue for the young people, with many feeling marginalized for being unable to ‘keep-up’:

“…you get an advert for a ring tone quite often [and] some people get them all the time and it, there’s not always money for it. And if you haven’t got it, then, you’re, like, out of fashion, sort of thing.” (Female, 13, Devon)

“if everybody else has got one and they’re showing it off, saying they’re pink with cameras and stuff and you haven't got one, yours [seems] rubbish or something.” (Female, 11, Devon)

“I’m not saying it happens in my school, but if you don’t have a mobile ‘phone, you sometimes get bullied and that. “ (Female, 13, Manchester)

Only a minority of the young people did not feel subject to the pressures most young people described. For example:

“Well, for some people there might be [pressure], but I’m not really bothered ‘cause my ‘phone isn’t, like, one of the best. It’s not camera or video or anything. But as long as I can use it, then I’m not really bothered what sort it is. “ (Female, 13, Devon)

“I think there is pressure. I’m probably not a very good example. I’m completely oblivious to peer pressure and to popular culture, so I’ve no idea, basically. I look for a mobile ‘phone, not that’s fashionable, but something which I can run for two weeks without recharging. And that’s about all I want.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

Health

The majority of young people were not concerned about risks to their health from using their mobiles. Most were unsure about the potential health dangers, and whether the concerns that did exist were real or not. As these comments show:
“It’s been in the news lately. There was a young girl who’d got RSI from sending too many texts. And there’s also, I believe, a fairly well, significant risk of cancer and brain tumours from using this sort of thing.” (Male, 15, Manchester)

“I have thought about radiation, but I’ve just read articles about that for example, in New Scientist, which claim that it’s not really much of a threat unless you actually use your phone all the time.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)

“Well, they’re going on about radiation and how it can affect your body, but I’ve read something which is saying it’s a load of nonsense, I’m undecided.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

Most young people felt, however, that they did not use their phone enough to be at risk. For example:

“I know that thing about cancer or something but ‘cause I don’t use it that often, I don’t think it’ll affect me that much.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

3.5 Social influences on mobile phone use

There were a number of social factors identified in terms of how young people used their mobile phones - specifically gender, age and locality.

3.5.1 Gender and mobile phone use

There were clear gender differences in the study. Most of the females used their mobiles regularly, usually on a daily basis. There was much more irregular use by the young males. Further, girls’ use of their mobile phones on an average day far outweighed the boys. Most of the females reported sending a large number of text messages:

“If I’ve got credit, then I’d probably use it, well I have used it 30 or 40 times a day.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“I think generally quite a lot, I definitely use it once a day and probably about five times a day, but a lot more at weekends.” (Female, 16, Manchester)

“Every day! (Laughs).” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

The young men in the study also thought young women used their phones much more frequently, and in different ways. Girls were described as more attached to their phones, with phones being a key part of their social lives. Indeed, texting friends, and socialising using the mobile phone were seen as a predominantly female trait. As these young men describe it:
“The girls are very into phones… ‘cause my girlfriend’s getting a new phone at Christmas, and she’s all ‘yeah!’ ” (Male, 15, East Sussex)

“I think girls use it more than boys, ‘cause it’s normally girls that are walking about listening to music and they text their friends a bit more often. But boys just have it for emergencies and stuff.” (Male, 12, Manchester)

“I think girls need them more because girls always ring everyone up and go, ‘oh, what you wearing or something like that…” (Male, 14, Manchester)

Many of the males in the study also thought that females and males used mobile phones differently. For example:

“…girls probably like to text and boys probably like to call a lot…” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“I think girls use it more for like pictures. They’re always taking pictures of their friends. I don’t know I think boys are more relaxed about it. They’re not like taking pictures everywhere.” (Male, 13, Manchester)

One young man also described how mobile phones were used more as a result of being in a relationship:

“Yeah well, it depends on what’s going on in my life. If I need to have one ‘cause I had a girlfriend or something, then I’d need to use it a lot more than I would if I’m single.” (Male, 15, East Sussex)

The views of the young men above were largely shared by the young women. For example:

“I think girls use their phones a lot more and they text a lot more…. Boys just ring their parents when they have to…I don’t think they have as much to talk about.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

“I’m not sure, I’m guessing but I suspect that when you text your sort of boy mates, it’s a bit more practical… whereas I’ll text my girlfriends all the time, just pointless things, I don’t think a boy would normally…” (Female, 16, Manchester)

Another interesting gender difference in the study was how the young people described their attachment to their mobile phones. Young women talked about the significant part that mobile phones played in their lives, and were very vocal about what their phones meant to them. An interesting age difference also emerged at this stage, with the older females in particular describing their mobile phones as essential in their day-to-day lives. For example:

“I don’t know what I’d do without my mobile.” (Female, 17, London)

“I’m lost without me ‘phone.” (Female, 16, Manchester)
“My phone’s my life. (laughs) I don’t go anywhere without it.” (Female, 17, East Sussex)

“I’m constantly texting friends. (What if you didn’t have your mobile?) I’d die, it would be awful.” (Female, 15, Manchester)

The young men were much more likely to view their phone as more practical, with the mobile seen as a handy tool than a ‘must-have’ item:

“I think I’d miss it if I didn’t, because it’s more convenient.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

“…I could live without it, because people have obviously (laughs) - it’s not like we’ve had it for hundreds of years.” (Male, 17, East Sussex)

When it came to safety, mobiles were described as equally important to both males and females. The young women highlighted that boys faced just as many risks as girls (albeit different risks) and were therefore equally in need of mobile phones. As these comments show:

“I would say both of them [males and females] need them, ‘cause these days everything’s getting worse. It’s really bad these days, I think guys need it just as well as girls.” (Female, 17, London)

“It’s not more important really for girls. Even though girls are more vulnerable, I think boys can be vulnerable as well, ‘cause there’s more of a risk of getting beaten up, I think. There’s more fights with boys, but they’re just as vulnerable - maybe not like for rape or something, but for getting beaten up.” (Female, 15, Devon)

“I think it should be the same for everybody, really. ‘Cause people usually think girls are more vulnerable, but it should be the same for everyone, really, ‘cause even though girls seem to be more vulnerable, I think that boys can be have trouble as well… ‘cause people always think that people target girls but I’m sure that boys need to feel as safe as girls”. (Female, 14, Manchester)

However, many still felt that it was more important for young women to have a mobile phone as a safety measure. Young men were still seen as vulnerable to harm, but the dangers were not seen as equal to those faced by young women.

Some of these themes in relation to gender and safety are also picked up below.

3.5.2 Age and mobile phone use

It was the general consensus that young children (usually identified as age nine or ten and below) should not have mobile phones. For example:
“I think it’s ridiculous if someone the age of six has a mobile ‘phone. Why do they need it, ‘cause they’ll be with their parents.” (Male, 12, Manchester)

“I don’t think they’re suitable for people under 10 years old ‘cause I don’t think they understand the dangers of the dangers of having a mobile ‘phone and what you’ve got to look out for…” (Male, 13, Manchester)

“If they have a mobile ‘phone, they might not be responsible enough to know who to give it to so, an older person could ask for it and they could bully you for your ‘phone and then get really, they wouldn’t know what to do in that situation.” (Male, 12, Hampshire)

One young woman mentioned the Teddyfone - a new mobile specifically aimed at very young children. She considered it inappropriate to market phones at this age group:

“Because, like, they were saying about they were making these new teddy mobiles… why would you wanna do that? And they were just saying, because it has less radiation. But, like who cares? They don’t need a ‘phone… It’s ridiculous! (laughs) It’s, like, a 5 year old going round with a mobile ‘phone. Who are they ‘phoning?” (Female, 11, London)

Most young people felt that mobile phones should only be for young people who really need them, i.e. for when they are away from the family home. As these young people state:

“I think, if you start going - whatever age you start going outside, then I think you should have a mobile ‘phone at that age.” (Female, 11, Devon)

It just depends how much you go out and how much you’d benefit from using it. Some people might not go out a lot, so they might not even need one ‘til they start working. So, I guess it just really depends…” (Female, 15, Devon)

“I think it’s more circumstances, because some people will need them more than others. I think it’s quite reasonable to say there will be 9 year olds who need them more than, say, 13 year olds.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

Most young people also felt their generation understood and used mobile phones better than their parents’ generation. Mothers were most often identified as the least capable users – particularly in light of texting. The following comments illustrate these points:

“She’s [mother] not too good at texting. It takes her ages to read my texts, it’s just easier to ring… She can do basic stuff. She can just about text, but not using any shorthand really. “ (Female, 15, Manchester)
“Mum and dad prefer to ‘phone, but I prefer to text. They don’t get texting.”
(Female, 16, Manchester)

“My mum’s a bit slow on ‘em because I don’t think she uses hers that much. But my dad uses them a lot… so he’s pretty good on phones.”
(Female, 13, Manchester)

“I had to teach my mum how to use her mobile. My dad - I wouldn’t say he’s the best, but I wouldn’t say he’s the worst…” (Male, 14, Manchester)

In general, the young people felt that their parents’ generation were not competent users of mobiles:

“I think my mum uses it quite a lot. She’s always texting her friends with it. But a lot of adults, they don’t use it that often. I’ve noticed that a lot of them don’t actually know how to use it.” (Male, 12, Manchester)

3.5.3 Safety in the local area, and mobile phone necessity

Young people from both urban and rural areas commented on the need for mobile phones in their locality. For example:

“When I’m at my friend’s or something, she’ll say [mother] I’ll ring your friend’s house or ring your mobile’… ’cause my mate’s isn’t the safest area…” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“I think there’s an equal balance. If you live in the country, you’re gonna need it because of getting hold of people. More in the city because of things that could happen and your parents are more worried, but also in the country because if you live further out, you might need it to contact people… because some of my friends live out in the country and they use it quite a bit because of, like, say, they’re getting buses to school and then they’ll use the phone say, ‘look, I can’t catch the bus tonight, Can you pick me up.’ [Its] equally useful wherever you live.” (Female, 16, Devon)

Many young people talked how, in general, it was useful to have a mobile phone wherever you lived.

3.6 Internet use

Many young people talked about using the internet, especially in relation to their mobile phone behaviour. The uses of the internet are described next.

Almost every young person used the internet regularly. The main ways in which young people used the internet were via MSN Web Messenger – a free online service allowing users to talk online to friends, family etc in real-time. MSN was very popular with the young people as they saw it as convenient, safe and cost-
efficient. Most families also had broadband which allowed for unlimited free use. The cost was also brought up in terms of texting - young people said they tended to use MSN rather than their mobile phones at home as it was free, and more could be said. For example:

“... it costs me 12p a text for like five words on a text. Whereas if I just go onto the computer, [I can] speak to loads of people.” (Male, 11, Devon)

“cause I used to use [mobile phone credit] up really quickly ‘cause I texted. But now I’ve got MSN, I don’t text half as much.” (Female, 15, Devon)

Young people also felt, however, that mobile phones were better in other ways in terms of easy, instant contact:

“MSN is free and you don’t have to worry about the [mobile phone] credit factor. I don’t know, really. Apart from the fact that it’s free, there’s the draw back that it’s at home [your] computer, so you can’t get at people anywhere.” (Female, 16, Devon)

Other uses of the internet were for homework, games, downloading music, special interest sites, and friends’ sites. These were most commonly used by the young women. For example:

“I go on the Bebo site… People, they can send you a message, a little e-mail that’s like, not an e-mail - it’s one of their things.” (Male, 14, Scotland)

“I used to go on like, a dating thing. Well there’s all different age ranges - there’s people who are 50 there, but you have be 16 to on there, but I just lied about my age and then I used to go on something else that was for friends but I can’t remember what that was called.” (Female, 14, Hampshire)

“I’ll go on to Teen Chat - that’s also a chat as well… you have to know the people to be able to talk to them… you have to type in the person’s name [and] fill out a little thing about them… so, you know the person before you get to talk to them.” (Female, 11, London)

Many young people had mixed views about friends’ sites. Young people were often concerned about the risks, and were aware of the media debate about this:

“I don’t feel it’s safe [using chat sites] and sort of, you hear these stories of people lying and things that you don’t know them and you can’t see them. Therefore you don’t know that they’re telling the truth.” (Female, 16, Devon)

“Well, she [mother] worries about me going on sites that aren’t appropriate. Just stuff that people, that’d lead you to chat room, which you don’t’ wanna be on and somebody can try and get you to meet up. I don’t meet up with nobody.” (Female, 13, Devon)
A few young people were also concerned about the safety of personal data, and use of such sites. Friends’ sites in particular were thought to be open to manipulation, as private information was so readily available. As these young people say:

“Sites like Bebo and stuff that my friends, they mostly have accounts on them, but I don’t have one. Mostly because (laughs) I’ve not really got round to it. I’m not that keen about having a load of information about me on the internet.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)

“I have got one on MSN and My Space and you could share pictures and stuff. And I think it’s quite good… [but] you can just get pictures of people from it [and] you might not want someone to go on it. And someone you don’t know could go on it. And get pictures off you.” (Male, 15, London)

3.7 General views: Young people and mobile phones

As a conclusion to the interviews, we explored the following questions:

- Do mobile phones enhance safety or put young people more at risk?
- Do young people take more risks because they have a mobile phone?
- Do young people feel pressured into having mobile phones?
- Are young people generally for or against mobile phones?

Young people’s responses are described below:

3.7.1 Do mobile phones enhance safety or put young people more at risk?

The majority of young people did believe that having a mobile phone enhanced safety. It was often described as a back-up measure and a lifeline. For example:

“If something happened to you like, if someone tried to grab you, you can run away and ring the police [or call] someone to help, like your parents.” (Male, 15, Manchester)

“…talking of crime, if something happened [you could] run to a ‘phone box. Or if someone got hurt, if you had a mobile right with you there, you can just call someone. It could even save a life. Yeah it’s think it’s definitely a benefit on safety. Just everyday safety.” (Female, 16, Devon)

Though a minority of young people felt that mobile phones could put young people more at risk (through being a target for muggings, or through bullying etc), the majority believed that the good points far outweighed the bad. As these young people comment:
“Well, I think the communication makes a big difference and I don’t think it makes that much difference with theft. It might make a difference to bullying, but I think it’s outweighed by the communication value of it.” (Female, 14, Hampshire)

“The only thing they risk is getting mugged but I think it is safer on balance…” (Male, 13, Manchester)

“I think if you use them in the right way, then they make you safer because. Like, the way I use it, no-one would know that I had a ‘phone on me, so it makes me more safer, but if you’re flashing it about then people know…” (Female, 14, Manchester)

3.7.2 Do young people take more risks because they have a mobile phone?

There were mixed views in answer to this question. Some did feel that more risks would be taken, because mobiles made young people feel ‘too safe’. As these young people comment:

“It is false [sense of security], I do think. Because people do tend to think that they can rely on the ‘phone, which they can’t.” (Male, 17, Devon)

“I think probably they would, yeah, ‘cause if you didn’t have a mobile ‘phone, you’d think I can’t do that because I can’t contact my parents. [With mobiles] they can go out really late and they’d still be able to contact parents, but they wouldn’t usually do that.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

Some young people actually reported first hand-experience of this:

“Well, if I go into town, I’m actually quite happy to split up from my friends, which I wouldn’t have been before, without a mobile ‘phone.” (Female, 13, Devon)

“I think I would actually. I do take more risks cause have it.” (Female, 15, East Sussex)

“Whatsoever happens on your mobile, that is personal. Your parents do not know what you talk about, who you talk about and who you text. So yeah, I think people take more risks with mobile phones.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

Other young people though, felt that having a phone did not lead young people to take more risks. As these young men comment:

“If people are going to be reckless, then they’re going to be reckless and I don’t think a mobile ‘phone’s going to do an awful lot to that.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)
“I don’t think that [taking more risks due to having a phone] would really become a problem… I don’t think it would feel safer because you had a ‘phone, so you wouldn’t necessarily do that.” (Male, 15, Hampshire)

3.7.3 Do young people feel pressured into having mobile phones?

The majority of the young people said they did feel pressurised into having a phone. The pressure was seen to come from their peers, as well as the media. For example:

“…pretty much everyone [has a mobile] and you see people who don’t, they’re left out and they can’t text each other and stuff.” (Female, 13, Hampshire)

“But I think it’s quite good to have a mobile ‘phone as well, so you’re like all your friends. ‘Cause you can be left out without it.” (Male, 11, Devon)

“I’m not saying that people should go with what society says but I’m just saying that everyone’s got a mobile in school and even though you don’t wanna be how everyone is, you’d still want to be part of that group where you have a mobile, in that you can, like, text and call….when I was 2 years back, when I’d just started school there were a few girls that didn’t have mobiles and they’d just, like, cry ‘oh we’ve not got a mobile, we’ve not got a mobile’ even though me myself, I didn’t have a mobile at that time I didn’t used to cry over it. But I just used to think that I should have one, and all the girls in my year that had one [were] pressurising me a lot saying ‘how come you’ve not got a mobile’, ‘tell your parents that you want one’ and like ‘oh, it’s bad not to have a mobile’. So yeah, I think it’s quite pressurising.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

The importance of staying within the ‘in’ group was mentioned by some young people, either from their own experience, or through observations of others:

“There is this girl who I think [feels pressure] because she shares her mobile phone with her mum, I know she does because I’ve been to her house, but like everyone else has one, so she wants to have her own…” (Female, 11, East Sussex)

“Definitely. It’s kind of, a fashion accessory, and if you haven’t got one, then you know, you’re not in fashion, therefore you’re not really ‘in’ sort of thing.” (Female, 16, Devon)

For a few, not having a mobile phone was a barrier to maintaining friendships. As these young people comment:
“[One friend doesn’t have a mobile] and it’s just annoying, we can’t get to know her, we can’t text her, we can’t find out where she is, but were not nasty to her or anything like that.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“If someone doesn’t have a ’phone, they’re singled out… and if you can’t keep in contact with your mates, but they can keep in contact with everyone else, you’re not in the forefront of their mind and eventually you are forgotten (laughs)” (Male, 15, Devon)

“Well, sometimes, I’m not saying it happens in my school, but if you don’t have a mobile ’phone, you sometimes get bullied and that.” (Female, 13, Manchester)

3.7.4 Are young people generally for or against mobile phones?

In general, the young people in this study were very positive about mobile phones. Safety came out as the top reason (including peace of mind for the parents), followed by convenience and ease of communication, independence and social reasons.

Many young people wanted to stress that they thought of mobile phones as an essential tool, and not a fashion accessory. As these young people comment:

“It causes arguments when you don’t have a [good] mobile ’phone, or something. But if it was just for calling, it’d all be the same and it’d be all right.” (Male, 14, Manchester)

“Like, photo phones. It’s quite handy to be able to take photos [but] don’t need to be able to. It’s only to contact people that you need a mobile ’phone. All the rest of it are just add-ons.” (Male, 15, Devon)

In concluding this section, therefore, most young people were generally in favour of mobile phones, and saw them as an essential part of modern life.

3.8 Findings from the personal records

This section summarises the results from the personal records that young people and parents completed over the same seven day period. It includes information about the numbers of calls and texts made, and who they were to.

First, the following table shows all calls/texts made in an average week by the age of the young person and who they contacted:
Second, the following table shows all calls/ texts received in an average week, by the age of the young person and who they contacted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mum/ dad/ carer</th>
<th>Friends + boyfriends/ girlfriends</th>
<th>Other family</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total calls/texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>11 + 12 years</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 + 14 years*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>173**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total calls/texts</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two male respondents in this group did not fill in anything in their records – it is not clear if this is due to non usage of phone or incomplete data

** The total was brought up significantly through one girls’ mobile phone use to friends. The group text/call toll for the week, minus this one case, was 89

Third, the following table shows all calls/ texts made in an average week, by the gender (of young person) and who they contacted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mum/ dad/ carer</th>
<th>Friends + boyfriends/ girlfriends</th>
<th>Other family</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total calls/texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 + 12 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 + 14 years*</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>174**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total calls/texts</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, the following table shows all calls/texts received in an average week by gender (of young person) and who they contacted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mum/ dad/carer</th>
<th>Friends + boyfriends/girlfriends</th>
<th>Other family</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total calls/texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>186*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of calls/texts</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* As stated previously, the huge difference in patterns of calls/texts to friends is in part due to one case

** As stated previously, two males did not fill in their personal records

As the results of these tables show, the findings from the personal records generally supported the views of the young people described in this chapter. Thus the main results from the personal records were as follows:

- The younger age groups (11 and 12-year olds) did not use their mobile phones a great deal during the seven day period. When they did use it, it was more for speaking to (as opposed to texting) parents. The topics usually related to plans and arrangements. Only two of the young people reported using the phone to communicate with friends, and this was again infrequent.

- With the mid teens (13 and 14-year olds) there were notable differences in how they used their ‘phone, compared to the younger age groups. Gender differences were also noticeable. For girls, phone behaviour was much more related to texting friends for social reasons, and calling parents to
check plans and arrangements. There was a significant amount of social
behaviour (chatting/ gossiping etc), mostly with friends, but also
occasionally with parents. Parents were also much more likely to call girls,
in order to ‘check if I’m ok’.

- With the 13 and 14-year old boys, there was also an increase in social
behaviour, but this was significantly less than the girls. Interestingly, two
young men with girlfriends seemed to be using their mobiles for texting
much more so than other young men. Phone usage with parents was much
less common than it was for girls. There was less checking on well-being,
and more direct questioning, for example, “When will you be home for tea”.
The young men also appeared to use their phone for calling, rather than
texting.

- The older age groups (15, 16 and 17-year olds) were using their phone
much more for social reasons. Contact with parents on the mobile was
much more about texting than calling. Parents also contacted young people
of this age a lot less. There was a slight gender difference with boys
starting to increase in the use of the phone for social reasons.

- Most young people said that their personal records reflected a typical
week. However, some young people were short of credit and so were using
their phones less during that period. Most of these were girls.

All of the issues raised in this chapter are explored further in the next chapter,
which looks at the perspectives of parents.
CHAPTER 4

PARENTS’ VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter explores the parents’ views, focusing on the following areas:

- Family relationships
- Plans and arrangements in the family
- The role of mobile phones in parental monitoring and supervision
- Benefits and concerns of using mobile phones to monitor and supervise young people
- Social influences on mobile phone use
- Young people’s Internet use
- General questions about young people and mobile phones
- Findings from personal records

4.1 Family relationships

This initial part of the interviews explored the relationship between the parent and the child. Two main questions were addressed - how much time do parents and their children spend together, and how do parents describe the communication with their child? These questions are discussed individually next.

Most parents felt their children did spend enough time at home and/or with the family. Some parents reported laying aside specific time that the family would spend together, in order to encourage communication and family bonding. As these parents commented:

“We go swimming occasionally, we do computer stuff together - that’s our main thing. [C] likes board games. I try and do that with him when I get time. And at the moment, I’m trying to get him into doing a bit of cooking with me. You know, we’re gonna make some Christmas stuff... it’s important for him to do activities like that.” (Mother of 14-year old male, East Sussex)

“I try and take him out for walks sometimes, but he’s a bit reluctant these days unless it’s something he’s particularly interested in. Sometimes we’ll go to the pictures together. I managed to get him a bit more interested in reading recently and I’ve just recently said we’re gonna read that together. So we do some things together and [some things] with his mates.” (Mother of 14-year old male, Manchester)
For those parents whose children did not spend much time with the family, they most often felt their child had other priorities, and generally preferred to spend time with friends and peers. The following quotes provide a good example of this:

“…she likes to be out. She likes to be with her friends, she gets bored easily… I’d like to spend more time with her but, you know, she would just rather be out…” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“He’s a teenager. It’s not cool to be friends with your mum. I just nag him to tidy his room and have a wash… I’m just a nag.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

A few parents noted a change in their child in this respect as they had grown older. As these mothers comment:

“…he changed quite suddenly. I don’t know what he’ll say about it, but he changed quite suddenly from not going out very much at all, to suddenly going out most weekends. And that was quite a big change for me…” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

“They do their own thing and I do my own thing. Whereas when they were younger, we used to spend more time doing things like going out at the weekend and - like, going to the park or to the zoo or something like that. But as they’ve grown older, they do their own thing, so that’s what’s happened, really.” (Mother of 17-year old girl and 15-year old boy, London)

Communication with children and young people was seen by most parents as positive. Some parents described talking to their child a great deal on all kinds of topics. Others simply felt they had a good standard level of communication, enough that they were happy knowing their children were okay. For example:

“I don’t think we talk to each other massively about boyfriends and girlfriends and stuff like that. I think we have enough communication…every now and again I check out with them and they say they would talk to me if they were worried about anything, and I think that’s true, and they have done.” (Father of 16-year old girl, and 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“I wouldn’t say we talk to each other a lot, but we are close… I think that most things she can talk to me about, and I can talk to her. I hope that she thinks I’m approachable, and from what she says to me, I would say that we have a close relationship.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

The parents that felt they had little or no communication with their child tended to put it down to the same factor – ‘they’re a teenager’. As this mother comments:

“Nothing, tells me nothing. I’ve gotta ask her things and it’s like extracting teeth. She says she’s going out, I say where you going, [she says] down the village. She’ll say things about her schooling but only because she’s
Overall, most parents did feel communication with their child had changed over time. For some parents, this was seen as a positive thing as their child was showing signs of maturing and being able to hold more in-depth conversations. As these parents say:

“I would say she’s actually more honest now. Although we don’t chatter as much as we used to, the conversations we have are more open and honest.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“I think we’ve always had lots of conversations but I think the content and nature has changed as she’s got older, because obviously she’s [older now] and much more mature… “(Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

However, for other parents the change in communication was less positive, with parents feeling their children preferred to speak to their friends, or that they were seen as being out of touch and unable to understand their child’s issues. As these comments show:

“I think we chat about things a lot less, because the hormones have kicked in and you get this, ‘oh mum doesn’t understand about things, and occasionally she’ll come in from school and she’ll talk about things that have happened and she’ll volunteer [information]. If I try and get information out of her, it’ll like clam up and you’ll get two syllables.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)

“We’re going through the sort of, teenage hormone bit at the moment, so I’ll have chinks of light - like tonight, he’s been really nice and we’ve got on really well, and we’ve had a laugh. And the other day, he came in, in a really foul mood from school, and he won’t talk then. And if I ask, how’s it going? Oh! Too many questions!” (Mother of 12-year old boy, Gloucestershire)

Some of these issues are explored further below.

4.2 Plans and arrangements in the family

Most parents reported that their child regularly kept them informed about where they were going and what they were doing. Parents commented that the younger children did so for safety reasons, and the older children out of courtesy. For example:

“I don’t think he goes far from home without asking and it’s changed recently because at one time he wouldn’t go to the park without saying that he’s going or asking if he could go, but now he’s getting older he’ll go down
“and if I ‘phone he’ll say, oh - that’s where I am.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, Manchester)

Parents also asked their children where they were going and what they were doing. This was often in situations where the child was going somewhere the parent was more concerned about, or wanted to have more information about:

“For example, he’ll say, ‘I’m going out tonight and I’m going to the beach.’ But then that would need more prompting from me to say, well - which beach? And who’s going?” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

“If it’s as simple as her saying, I’m going round to [friend]’s house, I wouldn’t ask very much about that because I know where she’s going and I know she probably won’t venture out from [there] very far… But if it’s, I’m gonna go and see who’s in the park, I might ask more questions about who you going with, how are you getting there, how long are you gonna be, have you got your ‘phone with you?” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

Most parents did appear to trust their child, and were not overly concerned about what activities they may be doing when out of parental supervision. However, for a few parents this was more of an issue, with mistrust being born out of their child deceiving or lying to them in the past. For example:

“…we did go through a very bad spell that lasted probably about a year, when she was lying and was holding out. That she wasn’t where she said she was and things like that… I know a lot depends on who she’s going out with - which friends she’s with. There’s a certain set of friends I trust more than others. And it depends where she says she’s going and who she’s going to go with. I’m hoping that we’ve got over that, but I’m not a hundred per cent sure.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)

“No. To be honest, no [I don’t trust her] because she’s done it before, said she’s going to places and she’s not. That’s why I ask so many questions… the people she goes out with as well could be quite devious so she’s very easily led, but she forgets I was 15! (Laughs) I’m under no illusion at all because nothing would surprise me.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, Hampshire)

Many more parents checked up on their child’s whereabouts and activities with other people, than was suggested by the young people’s responses. Though parents said it was just to see if they were okay, or to make sure other parents were happy having their child over etc, a few parents did so because they were concerned. As these comments show:

“On the odd occasion where we didn’t know where he’d gone, yes we ‘phoned round his friends to find out where he was.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Manchester)
“I’ll say to my friends, if ever you see [O] out and he doesn’t, he’s up to no good - let me know.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

Parents had numerous safety worries for their children when outside of their direct care and supervision. The main areas raised were: violence and bullying, kidnapping and abuse, substances, traffic dangers, and racism. These are explored in turn below.

Violence and bullying

Parents were most worried about risks from other people. There were clear gender differences here, with girls being seen as most at risk of sexual harm, and boys being at risk more from fighting, violence and gang behaviour. There was also a clear age pattern, with parents of the older age groups (14 and up) much more likely to have safety worries in this area. As these parents comment:

“I think that a boy is more likely to be physically attacked, if there’s somebody out looking for a fight, they’re more like to pick on a boy. Whereas with a girl, I think she’s more at risk of a sexual attack. So, I do have slightly different worries from those points of view.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, 13 year-old girl, Hampshire)

“He’s getting into gangs more than anything. Like, he’ll go out with a few of his friends - meet up with some more and then it’s when gangs meet gangs. That’s the only worry...I suppose it’s the fighting and what they can get up to once they start fighting and repercussions afterwards, more than anything.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“I worry about other people - I don’t worry about [my daughter]’s choices, I worry about the people that could influence her, if you like.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

Kidnapping and attack

Being attacked, abducted or abused was another common concern expressed by parents. Again, parents of younger females were the most likely to raise this as a safety concern. As these parents say:

“...you’ve got the worries that have come into focus more recently on paedophiles and things like that. Which I know it’s always in the papers and the news and that, but it’s always pushed to the front of your mind.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

“...she needs to know something, you don’t befriend the teachers and caretakers, people that you think you trust... I said ‘they’re not your friends you don’t trust them. They are strangers even though you’re in their car. Don’t get in a taxi, you know, you don’t because they’re who they are, it’s
not all right for them to do things to you, because they say’…” (Father of 11-year old girl, East Sussex)

“… the abduction situation. I know it’s very rare, but I also know she’s a slight child, she’s 14, but she wouldn’t be able to put up much of a fight. It’s the behaviours of undesirable elements in society.” (Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

Drinking, smoking and drug use

In terms of risks from substances, a few parents talked about their concerns about a child smoking and/or using illegal drugs. However, most parents were particularly worried about alcohol use. As these parents comment:

“I do worry about drinking. He does drink, and he tells me that he has the odd drink. I don’t know whether that’s the truth or not, how much he drinks.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

“…they got completely hammered, her and her two friends. Completely! And [the friends] ended up in hospital because they were so drunk… I think it was a good lesson for her to learn, in as much as that, she was obviously very frightened, very worried about her friends … [also] if she gets herself into a vulnerable situation which, of course, if you’re boozing or whatever, that can be when you when you are vulnerable and we have, sort of spoken about this.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“…that would be my biggest, one of my concerns that drinking alcohol to excess and putting herself in a vulnerable situation… Possibly older boys, someone who wasn’t very nice, taking advantage of her because [she was in an] inebriated state.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, Devon)

Some parents expressed specific concern in terms of the effect that older siblings had on younger children in this respect. For example:

“The drink issues. She’s been really bad sometimes, comatose before. But she wouldn’t be like that again. I know [11-year old] is young but [she] is copying. Watching what her sister is doing. Even some of the words that [15-year old] will say, she is coming out with. So she’s copying so I say to [older child], she’s copying all the time, you’ve got to set an example” (Mother of 15 year old and 11 year old girls, Hampshire)

Traffic danger

Traffic did emerge as a safety concern, but it was not as widely reported as some of the other issues. There were no common themes either – it was more about general vulnerability to accidents due to lack of attention, or irresponsible behaviour. The following comments are good examples of this:
“I worry about road safety, because I think that quite often they’re plugged into their MP3 player or they could be texting on their ‘phone or receiving a ‘phone call or just not paying attention ‘cause they’re chatting with their mates. And I worry about them being hit by a car…” (Mother of 11 and 14 year old girls, Hampshire)

“That road does actually worry me quite a bit. I’ve taught him how to cross the road, and he is pretty good. Some of his friends will run across and be dare-devil and he’s told me about kids that do that.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, East Sussex)

Racism

Some families identified racism as a particular concern for them. This was both in relation to experiencing racist violence, and being stopped by the police. For example:

“… the other thing that doesn’t particularly worry me now, but worries me more as he starts getting older is, because of him being black, he has had some verbal racist abuse from other kids and has on the whole handled that pretty well, but that worries me a bit more as he gets older… And also (laughs) what worries me is as he gets older into his teens, is the potential of conflict with the police because of his colour and if he’s hanging about on the streets with other kids and because he has got, you know, he will answer back and he can be quite vocal. And that’s something we have touched on these issues, but it’s something I feel I have to prepare myself and him for.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“I think I worry for [my son] because of the police, and him being a black boy, that’s my worry, really.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, London)

The remainder of this chapter explores the role of mobile phones in family relationships, from parents’ perspectives.

4.3 The role of mobile phones in parental monitoring and supervision

This section focuses on parents’ views about the role of mobile phones in family life, and in relation to monitoring and supervision in particular.

4.3.1 What role do mobile phones have in family life? How are they used?

Almost all parents reported initially getting their child a mobile phone for one of two reasons. Firstly, it was a present as the child had been asking for one, and
secondly, for safety reasons as the child was spending more time out of the home. The catalyst for this was usually starting secondary school. As these parents comment:

“I think it was [because] she asked me if it was all right. She was at primary school. ‘Cause I was determined she was gonna have it before going on to the senior school, ‘cause I thought, really, it’s further away and I [can’t] meet her from school.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

“I think [J] had asked for one, yeah… [but] I wouldn’t have got her one unless I thought that it was important as well, so there came a point when it seemed that she was going out more and stuff, so yeah - but it was important for her to have one.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

A key part of the interviews explored the role of mobile phones in young people’s lives. We found that mobile phones were seen as an integral part of the lives of most families. They were reported as being used on a daily basis, and aided the daily planning of family life. Indeed, plans and arrangements seemed to be the primary use of mobiles, between parents and children. As this parent says:

“…we certainly wouldn’t use a mobile [for] normal communication. I wouldn’t be on the ‘phone to him when I’m out and about, just in a chit-chat kind of way at all. Not at all. We just wouldn’t use it like that. We use it for essential communication.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

Parents said that mobiles were rarely used for socialising within the family, but there were reports of young people using their mobiles to communicate more serious issues. This was particularly the case when face-to-face communication was more difficult. For example:

“I would speak to them face to face, but [my eldest daughter]’s more likely to send a text. She sent a text when she found out she was pregnant. Sat in her bedroom texting, rather than actually telling me face to face ‘cause when I went upstairs, we did do face to face. But she found it easier to broach the subject like that.” (Mother of 14 and 11-year old girls, Hampshire)

Another example shows how mobile phones were used after a difficult incident:

“When her friend almost got mugged… she texted me to tell me about it. And I think it was just a reassurance thing. ‘Cause I said, do you want me to come and pick you up? She went, no, no - I’ll be fine… she had that kind of anxiousness in her and she just wanted to kind of, share it, really.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

Other parents talked about the importance of the phone for emergencies, particularly in relation to medical conditions. For example:
“She is diabetic, so we do have a few problems relating to her illness, which we do sometimes resolve on the ‘phone, which actually is quite a major problem. About a week ago, she actually went to Brighton shopping… she has an injection she’s supposed to do and she went to do it and there was only two units left in it, so that was quite a problem, ‘cos she was in Brighton and her spare insulin’s in the fridge here… we had quite a few conversations trying to sort out the best way to deal with that. And so it was very useful then and she was very upset and tearful over it…” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)

Most parents accepted that young people would use mobiles for conversations that they did not want their parents to hear. For example:

“Oh, no - no, she prefers her mobile, because she goes in her room and it’s private and nobody listens to the conversations.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“I think [son] tends to use his mobile more. He’s got a lot more secretive stuff, texts and stuff like that - he wouldn’t want me to see that - he’s a bit [private] about it.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“He’ll use his mobile if he’s ‘phoning his friends… because he can go in his bedroom and talk to ‘em quietly.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

In general, mobile phones were seen as essential by parents, in helping monitoring their children and keeping them safe. As this parent comments:

“[I prefer them to have] the mobile ‘phone with them… because it means that either I can get in touch with them, should I need to. Or they can get in touch with me, should they need to. No doubt at all about that one!” (Father of 16-year old girl and 13-year old boy, Manchester)

However, parents also sometimes reported difficulties in this respect, with young people not hearing, not charging, or sometimes not answering their phones. This was a frustration to parents who did not see the phone as a privilege, but as an essential tool in their relationship. For example:

“No, she’s done it [not answered her phone]… maybe it was intentionally, when she was with a friend, I ‘phoned and then it’s been off. So, I don’t know whether it’s because she didn’t wanna talk to me or maybe because they were just, it’s in a party and she wanted to switch it off… I’ve told her that you have to leave your ‘phone on all the time, so I can get in touch with you.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, East Sussex)

“Yes - there have been times when I have said, ‘This is ridiculous. I’ve been trying to get hold of you and your ‘phones off… we often don’t know where you are and rely on the ‘phone to communicate.’ “(Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)
Parents generally felt their child did not mind them calling them on their mobile phones when they were out or with friends. However, it was also stated that there were sometimes tensions in monitoring in this way – young people feeling like they were being ‘micro-parented’. For example:

“I do use the mobile ‘phone to check up on where he is and I think we used to argue about it quite a lot and he used to think I was making him look small in front of his friends but now he seems to realise that [I’m not].” (Mother of 15-year old boy, Manchester)

“Well, it depends what she’s doing, really. She’s not always that happy - she does quite often tell me to go away.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

There were differences between how parents and young people used mobile phones. Parents preferred to use the phone for speaking, and young people preferred to text. Parents generally described preferring to call as they liked the immediacy of the contact with their child. For example:

“[I prefer to speak] just so that you know that they’ve got [your message] ‘cause sometimes, if you send a text, you don’t know whether they’ve got it and, as I say, she’s never got any credit anyway laughs so she can’t answer me. So, I usually ‘phone.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

“I will ring rather than text. I do text, but for me, a ‘phone’s principally for speaking. For him, a ‘phone’s principally for texting and so undoubtedly when the ‘phone rings, then he knows it’s home saying, where are you? What you up to? When you coming home? Do this. Do that.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

Parents also said they felt reassured if they spoke to their child:

“Sometimes she’ ll text me back and then I ring her, but I like speaking to her personally… [it’s] human contact, isn’t it? Rather than text… to hear her voice is more reassuring.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“Yeah so, I would normally [call], I wanna hear her voice…” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

When parents did text, this was usually in a situation where they felt they did not need an instant response. For example:

“[I text] ‘cause quite often I don’t necessarily need to get hold of him urgently.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

The next section explores some of these issues in more detail, particularly in relation to issues of privacy.
4.3.2 Privacy and mobile phones

In the interviews, we explored whether parents check their child’s phone, whether parents have even taken away their child’s phone, responsibility and ownership of phones, and issues around privacy of information using mobile phones.

Have parents ever checked their child’s mobile?

Most of the parents said that they did not, and had not, checked their child’s mobile phone. This was because they saw their child’s mobile as their own private and personal property. For example:

“…it’s like them having a diary. You wouldn’t really go looking through their diary.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, Devon)

“I wouldn't want to, it’s not fair. It’s her space, it’s her ‘phone ‘cause I wouldn't like her [to look at mine] it's not like I have anything to hide but it’s like ‘why? It’s my phone’. It's a trust thing.” (Mother of 14-year old girl and 11-year old girl, Hampshire)

“I’ve never actually picked up his ‘phone. I am someone that believes in someone’s privacy. If a letter came for him, I wouldn’t open it. … I suppose people would say that, as a parent, we have a right. But I think he also has a right as a human being to have some privacy.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

Other parents said they never felt they needed to check their child’s mobile phone, as they had a good and open relationship:

“I feel that’s her private ‘phone… I really would like to see if her dad’s phoned, maybe or has text or anything, but she always would tell me if he [had]. She’s very open about it…” (Mother of 13-year old girl, East Sussex)

“No [I wouldn’t check], but she’ll let me use the ‘phone whenever, anyway. If I checked it, she wouldn’t mind.” (Mother of 12-year old girl, Manchester)

A few parents said that they had not checked their child’s phone, but they might do so if they were concerned about their child’s behaviour:

“I guess if I had real concerns, then I would only do it if I thought that something was going on and she wasn’t talking to me about it, or wouldn’t talk to me about it - that I might get something from her ‘phone. But that would be a last resort. I’d hate to do that.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, Sussex)

“I think if I started to be really concerned about his behaviour or felt in some way he was hiding something from me, I think I would be tempted to.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)
However, a few parents described incidents where they had checked their child’s phone. For example:

“We check texts, we do check… I do worry about all these odd texts that come in from people we don’t know and strangers, and [B]’s so young, I don’t want her to be misled… there’s so much going on [and you want to] make sure that your child is safe.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“I certainly check some of their messages and I check their calls… ‘Cause if there’s a number there that isn’t on their memory, I’ll ask who it was, why they answered somebody they didn’t know, things like that” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

“…when I was very, very worried about something and [checking] completely illuminated my concerns and was very useful. She has no idea that I did that, but it meant that I could actually sort something out with her… it was a terrible thing to do, but it turned out to be very important.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“He was going out with a girl from school, and he was completely changing in attitude and his behaviour - everything was just atrocious…he was receiving an awful lot of texts messages, and I wanted to know what sort of text messages he was receiving.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, London)

Only a small number of parents reported checking their child’s phone just out of interest. These parents were always the ones that didn’t see the phone as a private and confidential thing. For example:

“I do check her texts, she knows that. If she leaves it lying around, I will check on it… she doesn’t make a big thing of hiding it away - no.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, East Sussex)

“I’ve read his text message. Just to see what he’d text, really more than anything. And it’s usually to his mates and it’s nothing… usually the quick form of texting. And it just makes me laugh, ‘cause [its] nonsense… I read them and then delete them, ‘cause he just keeps on letting them mount up, more than anything. He doesn’t care.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

Responsibility and ownership of mobile phones

We also explored whether parents had ever taken their child’s phone away. Some parents had taken mobiles away as a punishment, usually for bad behaviour:

“When she’s rude to me. When I asked her to do something and she disobeys. Or if I feel she’s done something that she shouldn’t have done…
She usually gets it back after an hour. I think its [her] lifeline - her mobile.”
(Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“I took his phone away for rude behaviour and door-slamming behaviour.”
(Mother of 12-year old boy, Gloucestershire)

But as this parent comments, this often had varying degrees of success:

“But she now tells me that she got wise to the fact that, when she was in trouble, I would take the 'phone away as a punishment, 'cause I knew that was what she wouldn't like. So she used to sneak the SIM card out and put it in an old 'phone, because I'd just take the 'phone away naively thinking that I'd confiscated the 'phone for the week!” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Hampshire)

Other parents also took young people's mobiles away, but because they felt their children were using it dangerously or inappropriately. For example:

“We had an incident a couple of years ago, when she gave her mobile number to somebody she met on the Internet and we took it as a very serious thing and the police were involved in it, checking out this person. We were very distressed by the whole thing, particularly as [our daughter] didn't seem to see the seriousness of giving her mobile out to a stranger. And so we took her 'phone away for two or three weeks…” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)

“It was to do with the 'phone… [a girl] was texting him at two in the morning and things like that, so we took it off him because he was told not to have it on and he disobeyed us, so it went… That was a real big punishment - he wasn’t happy about it, at all.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

The majority of parents, however, never took away their children’s phone. This was because the phone was seen as central to young people’s safety, and therefore was not something that should ever be removed. For example:

“Neither of us [either parent] has ever done that and nor would I see any reason to… I don’t really see it as being a privilege. I see it as being an essential part of how we stay in touch and keep them safe.” (Mother of 15-year old boy and 13-year old girl, Hampshire)

“Well, I would never take it away from them as a punishment, because I do look on it as a safety thing…” (Mother of 11-year old boy, Devon)

“I don’t think [taking away his phone] would be a punishment for him. I think he’d be jumping for joy.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“…if I took away the ‘phone, it would be me that would be more upset, ‘cause I wouldn’t be able to contact him.” (Mother of 17-year old boy, Devon)
We also explored issues around responsibility for the mobile phone. Most parents encouraged their children to see looking after their phone as part of their growing responsibility. For example:

“I have to a degree used it as a tool, in a way, to help him start looking at the value of money and possessions and those kinds of things because if he says to me, ‘where’s me mobile ‘phone’, which he does nearly every day. I’ll say to him, ‘well where did you leave it? You know, it’s your responsibility - it’s your thing.’” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“…he’s old enough to take responsibility for things. It gives him a bit of responsibility and it’s part of growing up.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

For other parents, responsibility was seen as a shared responsibility between parent and child. Even though the parent might manage the finance say, it was expected that the child look after their phone, and be careful about expenditure:

“Well, it is shared because I’m paying for it and it’s up to them to not go outside the bounds of what I can afford.” (Father of 16-year old girl and 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“I feel some responsibility because I pay for the thing, but I have to remind her to charge it and she leaves it all over the place. She doesn’t really manage it very well. It runs out of batteries or she doesn’t tell me when it’s run out of money.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

Many parents also pointed out the difficulty in relation to paying for the phone. They were keen that their child should finance it themselves, i.e. pay for credit when using it to socialise with friends, but then if such finance was denied, this could impact on safety. As this parent says:

“I’m a bit mixed up on that, really. ‘Cause part of me thinks he needs to have credit on his ‘phone, because if he doesn’t have credit, he won’t be able to use it to contact me. But another part of me thinks, he does have credit and he wastes it by texting all his friends, whenever he’s just seen them five minutes ago, and texting girls and things like that. Why should I keep paying for him to waste it? So, sometimes we will put money on it, but most of the time he has to do it himself, so yeah, it’s mainly his responsibility.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

4.4 **Benefits and concerns in relation to mobile phone use**

This section details parents’ views about the benefits of mobile phone use, and any concerns they had about young people using them.
4.4.1 Benefits

The main benefits of mobile phones were seen as: ease of communication, safety, peace of mind, and independence for their child. These are explored in turn below.

The vast majority of parents thought that easy communication was a key benefit of mobile phones. It was reported that making plans, monitoring a child’s whereabouts and generally being able to be more flexible was a definite benefit of mobiles. For example:

“…even when she was at school, I could send a text message, ‘not gonna be here when you get home, don’t panic.’ You know, that sort of thing, so yeah it certainly makes life a lot easier… contact whenever.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

“You can get him in an instant. There’s less worry in that you can keep phoning him up to see where he is - chasing him.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“I’d phone them when they get there, or ask them to phone me when they reach their destination. So, it’s really like a tagging (laughs) system” (Mother of 17-year old girl and 15-year old boy, London)

Ease of communication was linked to issues of safety. Parents described the ways in which mobiles could be used in potential emergency situations, and many described them as being a ‘lifeline’. Furthermore, though the safety aspect to mobile phones was mentioned for both genders, this was particularly so for girls. As these comments show:

“[J] went on a long journey the other day and one of the things is… ‘Have you got your phone?’ Because you know that if she’s got her phone and she’s got credit it on it, she can in some way reach help if she gets in any trouble.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“If she was ever in any trouble and she needed our help, she could phone us. Or if she had the phone the authorities, the 999, if she had to do that. The phone makes that a lot easier. So, it’s more that it’s a good tool for her.” (Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

Another benefit of mobile phones that parents referred to was ‘peace of mind’. As these comments illustrate:

“That’s when I’m worried about them, when I’m unsure when they’re gonna be getting back, and how they’re getting back – [the mobile phone] really gives me fairly instant access to both of them.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)
“I think they’re absolutely essential, for my peace of mind that I can always check that they’re OK at any point.” (Mother of 15-year old boy and 13 year old girl, Hampshire)

“I don’t know why, it’s probably an illogical feeling. Because, were someone to abduct them, the first thing they’d do is take the mobile ‘phone away. But it just gives you a warm feeling.” (Father of 13- year old boy, Hampshire)

The last benefit to be raised was how the mobile phone offered more independence to young people. Parents described feeling less concerned about their children being somewhere new, or going further afield, because of the extended contact afforded by the mobile phone. For example:

“…we’ve found it useful and in terms of independence, I’m sure it probably has helped her to get it a little bit quicker, possibly, ‘cause she’s got the ‘phone and she goes, ‘I’ll have me ‘phone with me, don’t worry, I’ll let you know what I’m doing.’ OK, then - so, we don’t worry.” (Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

“…the first time that we allowed him to go to the beach, it was only under the condition that he had the ‘phone and, to be honest, we ‘phoned him two or three times on that day, to see what they were doing and what they were up to…” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

“Another girl I had was on the autistic spectrum, so she was so vulnerable. You were constantly having to ‘phone her, sort of, every half an hour [but] once she had a ‘phone, I gave her a little bit of rope, she managed to go into Brighton… you can’t always believe they say they are where they are, because it’s never a land line, but at least you know that they’re OK.” (Foster mother of 17-year old girl, East Sussex)

In addition to the long list of benefits of mobile phones mentioned by parents, there were also concerns, and these are described below.

4.4.2 Concerns

Parents’ main concerns in relation to mobile phone use by their children were: theft and muggings, bullying and happy-slapping, contact with strangers, children being less communicative, advertising pressure and costs, and health risks. These are explored in turn below.

Theft and mugging

Mugging was by far the most prevalent concern for parents, in relation to mobile phones. For example:
“We worry about whether they’re gonna be attacked or, ‘cause people do get attacked just for mobile ’phones - and money and things. It is a worry.” (Mother of 13 and 11 year old boys, Hampshire)

“A friend of child’s] was almost mugged on the bus for her MP3 player, and [my daughter] witnessed that and she was kind of, upset and only a couple of weeks ago, she had another friend who was outside the school, who was surrounded by a group of girls and they attempted to obviously find her MP3 player. I don’t think they were successful, but - so, it’s that kind of thing, really. So we had to have a discussion about whether she could have a mobile ’phone or not.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

Due to these concerns, many parents talked about how they addressed safe ‘phone behaviour’ with their child, in order to help them avoid such incidents. This included being discreet about phone use and not showing phones off, and being aware of when and where to use them. As these parents say:

“I always tell him ‘cause he once had a flashing ’phone and I was concerned about that. It draws attention to it. But yeah I always tell him not to walk around [using it] blatantly. If he’s gonna use it, try and do it a bit discretely.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“…we know the ’phones do get nicked and whatever, so I had a few discussions… just in passing, about maybe you need to keep your ’phone there. Just as, if you’re walking round town, don’t have your bag dangling behind you.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“…he can tend always want the latest ’phones and wave it about it a bit. But when he goes into town, I say don’t show about with your mates. Keep it in your pocket… I’ve talked to him about not keep getting your ’phone out in front of people.” (Mother of 12-year old boy, Devon)

A few parents pointed out the concerns they had about how phones might draw attention themselves – i.e. ringing and/or alerting others to its presence:

"…we just talked about it and I said you can have the ‘phone but there are certain things that you need to be careful about. Number one is where you use it - if you need to contact me, text me, don’t ring me. You know, whatever be discreet....” (Mother 11 year old girl, London)

“I’ve got some concerns with the theft and mugging when it comes to [my son]. As I’ve said, when he’s travelling home on the train, and I’m checking up on him, I’m wary that if, while I’m ‘phoning, he’s on the ‘phone and people are seeing the ‘phone, that he could be mugged for it…” (Mother of 17-year old girl and 15-year old boy, London)

As a result of these issues, some parents did consider that having a mobile phone made children more vulnerable. As they comment:
"I suppose children have always been mugged for money, or whatever if somebody’s got the word out that someone’s got a certain amount of money on them or whatever… but because most children have got [mobile phones]. So if there’s a group of lads walking down the road, they’re gonna know whoever’s in front of them, 90% have got a ‘phone on them.” (Mother of 13 and 11 year old boys, Hampshire)

“Before, it would have been money or something else. But I think a mobile ‘phone is just something… I think [theft and mugging] was more of an issue when not every kid had them, whereas now, I think most children have mobile ‘phones.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

There were also some differences by locality, with rural parents feeling their children were less at risk. For example:

“Again, fortunately, in [E], it is actually a pretty safe town. It’s meant to be one of the safest towns in the country, apparently. So, touch wood, nothing’s happened yet… thankfully, they’ve never had their ‘phones stolen.” (Mother of 11-year old boy, Devon)

“…I do think that because we live in Devon, I think things like that perhaps don’t occur that frequently so, certainly, when we’re visiting other larger cities, I think it’s something that I have to keep instilling in her that you’ve got to be careful - people do mug for mobile ‘phones.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

“…I’d be more worried if she went to London and on the tubes and that type of thing. Sometimes she won’t even take her ‘phone if she goes out on trips like that, because I think she’s more aware of it… And I do read the local papers and you often hear someone’s had their ‘phone snatched or something. It doesn’t seem to be such a big crime here - the blatant, hand over your ‘phone - as you’re walking down the street.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, East Sussex)

As with the young people, there were some parents who were unconcerned about the threat of mugging or theft for their child. This was mainly because their child had inexpensive or undesirable phones:

“We all have absolutely bottom of the range, cheapest possible ‘phones… Nobody’s got a camera ‘phone because they’re just very basic tools, so I don’t think they would attract mugging or theft…” (Mother of 15-year old boy and 13 year old girl, Hampshire)

“…she hasn’t got the sort of ‘phone that somebody would want to mug her for. It’s not one of these fancy camera-phones - all-singing, all-dancing - they both have basic ‘phones.” (Mother of 13 and 11 year old girls, Devon)
Bullying and happy-slapping

In terms of concerns, most parents were aware of the potential for bullying and unpleasant events such as happy slapping. As these parents comment:

“[He] just informed me that was one of the pictures, the slapping pictures that his uncle told him to take off his ‘phone. Yeah, I am worried about that. I wasn’t aware that he had them on the ‘phone, but it’s something that I would tell him that his ‘phone is to be used for proper reasons – not nothing like that, you know.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, London)

“Well, he has been happy slapped at school. He was walking through the playground and [there was] this group of well-known children [and] one of them did a high kick on him, while the other one took pictures of it. [H] told me about it, but he didn’t want me to take it any further at school because he said it was just a random attack and he [didn’t want to] become a target.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“Well, she told me about it. She came home from school and told me about it. Yeah she cried a lot before she went to bed. Didn’t like herself [I was] very angry… she got these texts while she was at home, and we looked at them together and just laughed it off… we [eventually] just changed her SIM card and got her a different number.” (Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

The majority of parents did not feel that mobile phones made their children more vulnerable. Most parents felt that bullying and violence happened anyway, and mobile phones were just another ‘weapon’. For example:

“I wouldn’t see it as being an extra vulnerability. If somebody’s gonna bully, they’re going to bully, whether they do it face to face or on a ‘phone, so I suppose I don’t see it makes them any more vulnerable. And if somebody’s bullying them by text, they’ve probably been bullying them in school during the day as well.” (Mother of 15-year old boy and 13-year old girl, Hampshire)

“…well, we’re aware, obviously that both those things go on. It’s just another form of kids being mean to each other. I don’t see it as a new form of violence or whatever. It’s just the same violence in a different form.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

Contact with strangers

There was some concern from parents about children using mobiles to contact strangers, or people unknown to parents. However, most said that their child had a “nice group of friends”, or that their child was considered and careful about whom they gave their number out to. Where parents did express concern, there
was a clear age and gender difference, with mothers of younger girls being most worried. As they say:

“I do worry, yes. That’s why I try and keep a check on her mobile phone…” (Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“I think, in theory, there is this issue if somebody inappropriate gets hold of her number. It’s her way of accessing people that I might not want her to have access to. So, she does go to bed at night with the ‘phone in her room, so in theory… somebody could be ringing her…” (Mother of 13-year old girl, East Sussex)

“They know that they can communicate without anybody overhearing, don’t they? And they can quite easily just delete it off again, so there is ways of communicating with other people without anybody ever knowing what you’re talking about or discussing. But then, it probably is good for them. It probably has its good points. Because I didn’t have that when I was a child.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

**Children being more secretive or less communicative**

We also explored whether parents felt that mobile phones made young people more secretive, or less communicative. Many parents did feel like they had less control over their child’s private life, and were often wary about what might be being planned without their knowledge. For example:

“Yeah, I suppose there is the one point that, because you can’t always monitor the calls, etc, that you sometimes wonder what is going on and what they are planning. [Before] you could only use the landline from home. I suppose that is just the downside.” (Foster mother, 17 year old girl, East Sussex)

In addition, many parents felt that mobiles affected their children’s communication with them. For example:

“Certainly there’ve been occasions now round the table where he’s brought his ‘phone with him… we all know that we don’t bring toys or books or ‘phones to the table. That’s the unwritten rule. And a couple of times… we’ve been playing games of cards and he’s been reluctant to do it, so he’s brought his ‘phone with him as his own form of protest.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“…she spends so much time on it, and if you’re with her or you’re talking to her, the ‘phone is going all the time and that takes priority, so you can’t have a proper conversation with her, you know, you’re interrupted. Even at meal times, the ‘phone’s going which we find very annoying. I actually look forward to going away on holiday, to get away from it because usually they don’t work where we go.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)
Advertising pressure and costs

Concerns about media pressure to have newer and better mobile phones were also raised by parents. Though most parents seemed to have strategies for dealing with advertising, several parents expressed irritation at the way mobile phone companies upgraded models and targeted their advertising at young people. As these parents comment:

“(Mobile phone manufacturers) shouldn’t keep bringing out things, this is even better than the last one, this has got more things on… the last one he probably only had for 8 months, and then all he wanted for Christmas was just this latest ‘phone, ‘cause it was a lot slimmer. And then it’s a flip-top one comes in, so yeah. And it is hard, ‘cause you don’t wanna be ‘oh, let him get the latest phone’… you don’t wanna spoil the child, but you also you don’t wanna exclude him from things that they’re doing, ‘cause children can be mean, can’t they?” (Mother of 12-year old boy, Gloucestershire)

“Well the pestering doesn’t so much come from the children as from the company that sell you the things and I just get more and more… every day really”. (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

However, overall parents did not see advertising pressure as a real issue. For example:

“We seem to be immune to that in this family. The children are not very affected by peer pressure or media. [K] has asked me for a camera ‘phone but virtually as a joke. She knows she’s not gonna get one.” (Mother of 15-year old boy and 13 year old girl, Hampshire)

“…because of our financial situation he knows there’s not a hope…. To be honest, he’s not one for labels, having the most up-to-date this, that or the other. He never has been. I think that’s regardless of our financial situation. He just hasn’t been bothered by stuff like that.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)

Health risks

Finally in this section on benefits and concerns about mobile phones, some parents discussed possible health risks. Though most did express some level of concern, often the lack of conclusive scientific evidence led parents to say that there was little cause for worry. As these parents comment:

“I don’t think there’s been a lot of research yet to make me too worried about it.” (Mother of 13-year old boy, Manchester)
“It’s not been proved to me that there’s any significantly higher increase of any kind of health risks coming from mobiles.” (Father of 16-year old girl, Manchester)

“I do worry about that. And I don’t know how safe you are but you do hear things about radio waves and maybe cancer… I think what worries me is that because mobile phones have come in really so quickly, and because everybody has a mobile phone now, and particularly, children and younger people using them from quite a young age, you don’t know what the long-term affects are.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

Despite this, parents encouraged children to use their mobiles in the safest way possible. As these parents comment:

“I have told them not to use it for long periods because of the possible damage, but there isn’t much known about it, so I say to them use them [but] don’t spend hours on them.” (Father of 16-year old girl and 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“I’ve always been concerned about the health risks with mobile ‘phones. And certainly, when we first got one, I said it’s only to be used for emergency purposes. Not to be sat there for hours on the ‘phone to your mates.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

“I don’t like the cancer link with boys and mobile ‘phones and to be honest with you… testicular cancer with the boys, when their ‘phone’s in their pocket all the time… I tell him not to carry it in his pocket.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

In concluding this section, most parents did not feel that their young people were at risk from mobiles, mainly because they did not think that young people were using them enough to be at risk. For example:

“I know that it was a big concern and I looked at it, we’ve looked at it a couple of times. I’ve read articles on it and my belief is that, as long as the ‘phone is being used in moderation that there is no problem.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

4.5 Social influences on mobile phone use

In the interviews, we explored whether parents thought that patterns of mobile phone use were affected by a variety of social factors, specifically gender, age, and locality. These are detailed below.
4.5.1 Gender

First, we explored parents’ views about gender. Many parents felt that mobiles were used more to monitor their daughters’ whereabouts and activities more than their sons’, because of the greater risks to young women when they were out of the home. For example:

“… because I think there’s far more issues with a girl, abduction, rape. I think I would rather know where a daughter was more.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“…you’re naturally a little bit more cautious with the first one - especially with her being a girl, as well, I think. So, I think we were probably less willing to encourage independence than [we] may have been if [she’d] been a boy….” (Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

However, for most parents the use of mobile phones for monitoring and supervising their children (particularly in terms of safety) applied equally to males and females. For example:

“No the minute my daughter starts going out and about, she will get handed a ‘phone… my attitude is, they don’t get to leave the house without a ‘phone. [With gender] it doesn’t matter… I try to not differentiate between the boys and my daughter.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, Devon)

“…so many bad things happen to both sexes, you know, it’s not just girls any more.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, East Sussex)

Parents also raised another gender point in terms of the differences between how girls and boys used their mobiles. Reflecting the young people’s views, girls were often seen as the primary users, particularly for social reasons. As these comments illustrate:

“I’m pretty sure girls use it a lot more than boys – social - only because we’ve got friends who’ve got girls. And we know that it is a social thing.” (Father of 13 and 11 year old boys, Hampshire)

“I do think there’s a gender difference, but I’m not sure what. I hear the boys talking about the technology of the ‘phone - it’s got this and it’s got that and there’s a lot of status involved. The girls don’t seem as bothered about the technology. It’s more of the way it’s used.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

4.5.2 Age and mobile phone use

We also looked at age in relation to mobile phone use. Firstly we explored parents’ age and mobile use.
Many parents described the difficulty they sometimes had with using the mobile phone for communicating with their child, specifically in terms of texting. Parents also considered that young people were generally more au fait with mobile phones. As these parents say:

“I have a limited knowledge of technology and mobile phones. They [young people] love their phones…” (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

“It takes me half an hour to read her texts… it looks like there’s a kid with dyslexia who’s never been at school is writing it…” (Mother of 15-year old girl, Manchester)

We also explored with the parents whether young people were given more freedom at an earlier age because of mobiles. Parents were divided on this issue. However, for many parents, the ‘peace of mind’ factor often meant that parents were happier to let their children have more freedom and flexibility in their lives. Indeed those with older children often commented on the differences between monitoring and supervising this group compared to their younger children, in view of the advent of mobile phones. The following comments illustrate these points:

“[Before mobiles] it would have been harder because there wouldn’t have been that ease of contact. So, yeah, we probably have given her a bit more independence because of the ‘phone at an earlier age, yeah….” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“I don’t think I’d let them go as far as they do, or for as long as they do, if they didn’t have a ‘phone.” (Father of 13 and 11 year old boys, Hampshire)

“She gets more freedom than when [older child] was her age… She’ll go into Manchester now, but I don’t let her go without her ‘phone.” (Mother, 14-year old girl, Manchester)

4.5.2 Mobile phone use and locality

The use of mobile phones with regard to location was not a huge factor for parents. However, a few did talk about the importance of the phone in relation to location, i.e. the importance of a contact method in more remote locations, and being able to call for help in more urban locations. The following comment provides a good example of this:

“I think it’s more an issue of the fact that she doesn’t go to school in the area, so a lot of her friends are fairly far flung. They’re miles and miles away, some of her friends. So, if she’s going after school to a friend’s home, it might be 30 miles away. And obviously, because it’s a fairly rural area, then a lot of places are not accessible by public transport. So, having a ‘phone in that respect is quite handy, because she can then ring and we can make an arrangement to pick her up somewhere, perhaps meet half-way, or which parent’s gonna do the picking up thing… but I would have
thought if we lived in a more built-up area, there might be more concerns about safety. So, I would probably assume that young people of her age are likely to have mobile ‘phones to be able to keep in touch with their parents, again. Yeah, for different reasons, possibly.” (Mother of 16-year old girl, Devon)

4.6 Young people and internet use

Many of the parents in the study brought up the issue of young people’s internet use. This was for a number of reasons. First, because young people were able to access the internet from their mobile phones. Second, because many people talked about the relationship between texting on mobile phones, and sending messages via MSN on the computer. Thirdly, many people talked about some of the same issues emerging in terms of young people’s mobile phone use, and internet use. These findings are therefore briefly reported here, first in relation to monitoring and supervision of internet use, and second parents’ concerns about the internet.

4.6.1 The relationship between internet use and mobile phone use

As with the young people, parents noted the relationship between the use of the internet and how and when young people used their mobile phones. Again, it was highlighted that young people often preferred to use the internet, specifically MSN, at home as it allowed for longer communication, and was much more cost-efficient for the young people. As these parents comment:

“We started him off at £10 a month, but they’re not using that. They had an initial time where they were texting and talking to their mates all the time… I think, now that they’ve got MSN and all those sorts of things, they tend to use that for their instant messaging, rather than the mobile phone.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

“[S] is too careful for her to use her pocket money just on credit for mobile. That might change when she’s a teenager and there’s a boy involved… but at the moment she doesn’t really use it [mobile phone]. She’s on MSN much more – that’s her conversation piece. The phone isn’t really as much.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

4.6.2 Monitoring and supervising internet use

Most parents did monitor their child’s use of the internet. This was usually through asking the child what they were looking at, and/or looking to see what they were doing, as well as looking up website history and checking messages. Interestingly, fathers were most likely to do this. For example:
“I’ll check the history of the Internet sites they’ve been visiting. And they’re also aware that I do that from time to time. And it’s like, when they’re on MSN - [S] will be in her room, on MSN. And I’ll pop in every now and again and say, ‘who you talking to?’” (Father of 16-year old girl, Manchester)

“I’ve had a look at the sites she’s been on after she’s been on them, in terms of the history, and there’s nothing untoward that she’s been on... I have come in occasionally and watched her while she’s been on it and she has been on sites where there’s been, some of her friends give her sites to go on and then she goes on them and there’s a lot of swearing on them or - not pornographic pictures, but iffy pictures.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

Many mothers in two-parent households also often said that it was their partners who did this:

“I don’t monitor what he does on there but my husband does… he just goes in and checks everything, on the website he’s been on and everything.”
(Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“But at the end of the day, she knows that [computer use] will completely go over my head. But it won’t go over my husband’s.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

Quite often, monitoring and supervising internet use was done in a very open and deliberate way. This was often reflected in families who chose to have a computer in a family room, such as the lounge or kitchen. As these parents state:

“[The computer’s] in the living room – intentionally… so that we can see what’s going on with them, whenever they’re on the computer. Initially, we were gonna put in a network and they were gonna have computers in their room and to be able to access it from their own rooms, but we never quite got that up and running and that was - in the end - was quite intentional so that we knew where it was and we could oversee them at all times and make sure that all contact was kosher.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Hampshire)

“… the computer is deliberately placed in this room, where I can always see, there’s not too much worry about them going on sites that aren’t desirable or anything. [J] asked for one in her bedroom once, but I said no to that.” (Mother of 14-year old and 11 year old girls, Hampshire)

4.6.3 Parents concerns about the internet

There was a great deal of concern about children visiting chat-rooms, and a lot of this was focussed on the MSN messenger service. Again, fathers were the most likely to report worries in this area. As these parents comment:
“Well, if she’s using MSN, for instance, I’m not sure who she’s talking to. I mean, she says to me it’s only people she’s invited in to her chat room, but recently there was an example of bullying going on within the chat rooms against her friend and we had to deal with that.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“[With] MSN, we’ve talked about it and I believe pretty much most of the people he talks to are known to him. I think that there probably are people now that he doesn’t know… kids clearly aren’t as cynical as adults… they think of themselves as quite street-wise and sharp, so there is that double-edged concern there, if you like.” (Father of 13-year old boy, Manchester)

Many parents, however, felt their children were unlikely to ever engage in unsafe behaviour in this way. For example:

“I just trust my children that they’re sensible to use it in the right way, really. ‘Cause they watch a lot of movies on television and all these things that are happening, so they’re very aware of what kind of people can get on there… I feel that they’ll steer away from places like that - chat rooms like that. That’s the only thing, really. But I’m not that concerned because I just have that confidence in my children.” (Mother of 17-year old girl, and 15-year old boy, London)

Another concern that parents raised was giving out personal information, although most parents felt that their own children were very conscious of the risks in this respect. For a few parents, previous experience with this problem made it a particularly salient issue. As this parent says:

“Well, we had an incident whereby she’d put up a website, whereby she put our home telephone number and our address on, so we did have a security talk… she immediately took it off and I think it was purely a ‘oh, I hadn’t thought about that.’ But I made her deal with [the situation] because a gentleman rang here from there saying he was 15… [I made her speak to him] and I said ‘do you think he sounded 15?’ And she said, no’, and I said, ‘well - that’s what you get for putting on your address and telephone number on a website’ and that kind of, scared her into thinking - and I don’t think she’d do it again.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Hampshire)

Finally in this section, many parents were concerned that using the internet made children and young people less communicative, and more secretive. These parents often described anxieties about not being involved in their child’s online-world, and for some, feeling quite excluded by this. As these mothers comment:

“I don’t like it…. it’s another way of shutting off. He’s shut off to me. He’s not going to communicate with me if he’s on that… I just think it’s having a really detrimental effect on people’s ability to communicate with each other…. It feels like he’s in another world when he’s on there.” (Mother of 15-year old boy, East Sussex)
“I think especially since [R]’s now bought her own computer last year, and since she’s had that that she’s spent a lot of time up in her room, really. And as a parent, I find it quite, I do find it quite difficult, because there’s part of me that would like us to do more activity type of things, but she doesn’t really want to… It does concern me, ‘cause it’s something that obviously is a very solitary, although it’s not solitary, ‘cause she’s in communication with all her friends, but it’s something that’s not involved in.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

On the whole, many parents were concerned about the amount of time their child spent on the internet. Concerns about damage to health (impaired eye-sight from staring at the monitor), neglecting doing other activities (homework/ house chores etc) and anti-social behaviour were the main complaints. As these parents say:

“I’d probably prefer if it was less because then she would be with us more.”
(Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

“I think they spend too much time on MSN at the same time as doing homework. I have considered stopping it, but I was too soft and didn’t. They go in there saying they’re doing their homework and [they] don’t.”
(Father of 16-year old girl and 13-year old boy, Manchester)

4.7 General views: Young people and mobile phones

In the final section of the interviews, we explored parents’ general views about mobile phones. We asked parents whether mobile phones enhanced their child’s safety, whether they increased young people’s likelihood of risk-taking, and whether parents were generally for or against mobile phones.

The majority of parents felt that mobile phones did help to enhance their child’s safety. The main benefit was that if they ever got in any sort of difficulty, they had an extra lifeline. As these parents explain:

“… they definitely are useful… if a child goes off somewhere and wants to come home quickly or gets into any difficulty, they’ve got the ‘phone - they could ’phone somebody, so that’s good.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Hampshire)

“I would personally go with the side of safety, yeah, I really do. Because I wouldn’t want to think of any child out if they weren’t able to make a call if they needed to or - I think there’s nothing worse than having a child go out and you not be able to get hold of them.” (Mother of 17-year old girl, London)

However, there were a small number of parents who felt very strongly the other way. The main argument was that with mobiles, young people became an easy target for theft and mugging. This issue was of great concern for this group of parents. For example:
“I must admit, I don’t particularly feel that they enhance their safety. Although I could see situations where they could. I suppose if anything, I feel perhaps the reverse in some respects. I think they might be more vulnerable… I think [mobiles] are such an easy target to be stolen from them…” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

“I think they put them more at risk, definitely. Definitely - a hundred per cent… I just think they become a target and I think that, at the end of the day, you’ve got younger and young kids are getting mobile ‘phones and they’re getting nice mobile ‘phones - quite expensive… our eldest, was mugged for his mobile ‘phone a couple of years back… because of rise of the crime and drugs and all that kind of stuff, I just think it makes them more a target.” (Mother of 11-year old girl, London)

For the majority of parents though, the negative side-effects (in terms of any additional risks or increased vulnerability) did not mean they were against their children having mobiles. As with the young people themselves, the benefits of mobile phones far outweighed the potential negatives:

“…you can’t always monitor the calls [and] you sometimes wonder what is going on and what they are planning… but, for safety reasons, it’s better to have one than not have one.” (Mother of 17-year old girl, London)

“…you can’t guarantee against somebody pinching something off you. And I think the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

“… we had a happy slapping incident at school a few weeks ago that I saw a child was getting beaten up while someone videoed it, so there’s obviously dangers there, but I think, in her circle of friends and in her experience, it’s more of a safety thing.” (Father of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

Most parents did not feel their child would take additional safety risks due to having a mobile phone. Behaviour and risk taking was seen to be a product of personality, and not related to mobile phone use. This parent’s comment typifies this viewpoint:

“I don’t think so. No. I think that if you’ve got that tendency anyway, [mobile phones] are the tool that you can perhaps take it a little bit further than you would, but if you’re not gonna do it [take risks], you’re not gonna do it. You know.” (Mother of 15-year old girl, East Sussex)

For the few parents who did think young people would take more risks, it was due to the phone being seen as a false safety measure. As these parents comment:

“I think people can be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking, you’ve got a mobile ‘phone so that means you can go anywhere and do
anything and obviously, you’ve still gotta have the basic rules in place of boundaries of where you’re allowed to go and what time you’ve got to be in.” (Mother of 14 and 11 year old girls, Hampshire)

“I think it can perhaps offer an unrealistic safety - a false sense of security. So, I’ve got mixed feelings about that.” (Mother of 14-year old boy, Manchester)

However, most parents came to the same conclusion – there were risks but ultimately it was down to the individual to make those safe or unsafe decisions. As these comments indicate:

“I don’t know. I think you’re either risk-aware and risk-assessing, or you’re not. And having a mobile doesn’t necessarily mean you take more risks.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

“You see, that’s like saying young drivers take more risks because they’re wearing safety belts, because they feel safer. And I’m not convinced of the validity of the argument. I think you’re either gonna take risks, or you’re not. I think it depends on your personal make up.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

In summary, parents were overwhelmingly in favour of young people having mobile phones. With all the potential risks they may bring with them, the safety benefits and the ease of communication which mobile phones offered, made them an invaluable part of everyday family life. Though parents did say they could live without them, the general view was that they just made things a lot easier. The following comment illustrates this view very well:

“They’ve become a real essential. I used to hate mobiles, but once they’ve [the children] started using it, I’ve realised how safe they are and how good they are [for keeping] in touch at any time anywhere [with] all the family...” (Mother of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

### 4.8 Findings from the personal records

This section summarises the results from the personal records that parents completed over a seven day period. It includes both information about the numbers of calls and texts made, and to whom, and some more general conclusions from the records.

First, the table below shows how many calls/texts parents made to their children in an average week, by gender of parent and age of child:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 + 12 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 +14 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, this table shows how many calls/texts parents received from their children in an average week, by gender of parent and age of child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 + 12 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 +14 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 + 17 years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third, this table shows how many calls/texts parents made to their children in an average week, by gender of parent and gender of child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Child</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female children</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male children</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, this table shows how many calls/texts parents received from their children in an average week, by gender of parent and gender of child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Child</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female children</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male children</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the findings from the personal records supported the views of the parents described in this chapter. Thus:
The records showed that there was very little mobile phone communication during the week between parents and young people in the younger age groups (11-12) – this was often much to do with a lot less independent activity at that age. When mobile phone communication did occur, it usually related to requesting lifts from parents, or parents reminding their children to do something.

With the 13 and 14-year olds, there was a similar pattern as described by the young people’s records, with parents reporting a lot more checking on their daughters’ well-being rather than with their sons’. At this age, there also appeared less communication between parents of boys compared to parents of girls. The records show that girls were a great deal more communicative. Male phone behaviour showed parents calling them more, whereas female phone behaviour indicated a more mutual process.

A few parents commented on how unusual it was if their daughter was not in frequent communication via the mobile. For example:

“[M] came in to work with me [a few days last week] so she didn’t need to ring me at all on those days” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Manchester)

“Normally there would be many more texts. Found out Saturday that she had no credit.” (Mother of 14-year old girl, Hampshire)

With the older age groups (15, 16 and 17-year olds) there was again much more contact between girls and their parents, than boys. Girls requested permission to do certain activities, or let their parents know where they were. Boys asked for more things, or were replying to requests from parents for information.

The mother was generally the ‘port-of-call’ for contact regarding whereabouts, and mothers also checked more frequently on their child’s well-being. Fathers appeared to have much less contact with their children by mobile, and did not use the mobile for general ‘chit-chat’. As one father commented in his personal record:

“I am surprised how little we use her phone for contact. I must use her mum’s landline and face-to-face more.” (Father of 13-year old girl, Manchester)

A few parents left comments at the end of their personal records, saying how central the mobile phone was in their everyday lives and in their relationships with young people. For example:

“Normally [the] mobile phone is used much more… [I] would be lost not being able to have contact.” (Foster mother, East Sussex)

“As [R] is getting older and meeting friends in town, walking home from school and stopping at the shop, I feel much happier knowing I can call or
text to find out where he is, what time he’ll be home, and if he needs me to collect him - rather than me worrying if he’s alright. I know it’s good for [R] to have a mobile as well as being an important safety/security to get hold of me, he downloads and listens to the radio with his friends.” (Mother of 12-year old boy, Devon)

“I think it is very useful to have a mobile as I can reach my children… as in the past I have always ensured the children had a time when they had to be back and had to stick to it.” (Mother of 11-year old boy, Devon)

The final chapter of the report – which follows – summarises the main findings from the study, and provides some general conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This chapter summarises the results of the research, offers some conclusions, and describes the ways in which it can be used. First, however, it is useful to be reminded of the aims of the research. These were:

- How are mobile phones used in communication between parents and young people in families? For example - how often are they used? Who initiates this contact? What issues or topics are raised? Thus the study aimed to describe the role of mobile phones in family communication in general.

- What factors influence how mobile phones are used in family communication? For example, how do the patterns of mobile phone interaction (above) vary by key factors such as gender (of parents and young people), family type (single versus two-parent households), locality, culture and ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc. Thus the study aimed to identify the key influences on different patterns of mobile phone use in families.

- How are mobile phones used to keep young people safe? For example, how do parents monitor young people’s whereabouts and activities using mobile phones? How do young people use their phones to let their parents know about their whereabouts, or any changes in their plans? How are mobile phones used when young people are having difficulties, or in emergencies? Thus the study aimed to identify strategies that parents and young people have to use mobile phones to keep young people safe.

5.1 Summary of the results

A summary of the main results is detailed below.

Family relationships, and monitoring and supervision arrangements in general (which provide the context to the research)

- Communication and relationships were described in positive terms by parents and young people. Both groups also identified a change with age, with the older age-groups (14 and upwards) spending more time socialising and communicating with friends and peers.
• Young people in rural areas were found to spend more time in the family home, compared to urban young people. Rural young people felt they had less opportunities for leisure and socialising.
• Young people generally kept their parents informed about where they were going and what they were doing. For the younger age groups this was for safety, and for the older ages more of a courtesy to the parents, in case they were worried
• Young people generally were trusted by their parents. The only exception to this was when a young person had previously lied or deliberately deceived a parent.
• Parents were worried about their young person’s safety in relation to a number of factors, including street violence, being kidnapped, and risks from substances.

How do young people use their mobile phones?

• Almost all parents described initially purchasing, or letting their child have, a mobile phone for one of two reasons. Either because young people asked for one, or because of young people’s growing independence; this was particularly associated with the move to secondary school.
• Most young people had pay-as-you-go (also known as pre-paid) mobile phones. This gave them control over how much they were spending. Some young people paid their own bills, whilst in other families parents covered the costs.
• Young people used their mobile phone with parents to make arrangements, inform them of changed plans, and deal with any emergencies. They used phones with friends to socialise and make friends.

How are mobile phones used in communication, and monitoring and supervision?

• Mobile phone use between parents and young people was mainly in terms of planning and arrangements. However, both parents and young people talked about the importance of mobiles being available for emergencies.
• Monitoring using the mobile was seen by parents as effective and essential. However, parents did highlight problems with mobile use – including young people not hearing their phone, not charging it, or deliberately not answering their phones.
• Parents preferred to speak to young people on their mobiles. This was because they found it reassuring to talk directly to young people, and hear their voice. Most young people, however, preferred to text.
• Most young people considered that their parents were not very competent in using mobiles, particularly in relation to texting (short-term messages, or SMS). This was more so for mothers than fathers.
• Most parents saw the phone as their child’s own personal property and said they had never checked or looked at their phone. It was often described as like a ‘diary’, and therefore viewing it would be an invasion of
privacy. A small number of parents did view their child’s mobile phones, sometimes with and sometimes without their consent. This was most common when parents were concerned about their child’s behaviour or activities.

- Parents also commented that they would not take their child’s phone away as a punishment. It was felt that doing so could affect young people’s safety.
- Parents saw young people’s mobile phone as primarily the child’s responsibility or as a joint responsibility with parents, particularly in relation to paying for it. This strategy was often described in terms of helping young people develop responsibility and independence.

Benefits of using mobile phones

Young people

- For young people, the main benefits of using mobile phones were: ease of communication, safety, and independence. In addition young people mentioned: social reasons, parents being reassured, and keeping in contact with distant family.
- Young people felt they could do more, and felt safer, due to having their mobile phone.
- Whilst it did not apply to a large number, mobiles were used by some young people to have conversations they could not have at home – for example with a non-residential parent or estranged relative.
- Most young people also thought that an additional benefit of mobile phones was that parents were less worried about them. This was particularly true for girls.

Parents

- For parents, the primary benefits of using the mobile phone to monitor and supervise their children were: ease of communication with their child, a safety measure for the child, peace of mind for parents, and independence for the child.
- Mobile phones were seen to ease communication within families, and allayed worry on the part of the parents.

Concerns about using mobile phones

- Parents and young people talked about similar concerns about using mobile phones. The main areas raised were: theft and mugging, bullying and ‘happy slapping’ (an unpleasant incident recorded and circulated by mobile phone), expense, media and peer pressure, and health risks.
- Parents and young people in urban areas were more worried about muggings and theft compared to those in rural areas, usually because of their direct experience of it.
A third of the young people had experienced some kind of unpleasant incident with their mobile phone, such as bullying or happy-slapping. A third more reported it occurring to someone they knew. Parents were much less concerned about the issue.

Most young people felt there was peer and media pressure to have the ‘right’ phone. Those from lower income families in particular commented on the difficulties of keeping up with their peers in this way.

Young people and parents were unsure about the long-term health risks of mobile phones. However, both parents and young people said they tried to reduce any potential risk through limiting the amount of time spent on the mobile phone.

Parents also identified two further concerns about young people’s mobile phone use – the possibility of communication with strangers, and making their child generally less communicative.

**Social influences on mobile phone use**

- **Gender**: Girls were described by both genders as the more significant users of mobiles. They were also thought more attached to their phones, particularly for social purposes. The older girls especially reported very strong feelings towards their mobiles, describing them as vital in their everyday lives.

- **Age**: Parents and young people believed that mobile phones were not suitable for primary school children. They were best suited for older young people (age 11 plus), who were spending more time away from parents. Parents also described giving their child more independence when they had a mobile. The other age related finding was in parents’ use of mobiles - both groups commented on how parents were generally less adept at using mobile phones, particularly in regards to texting.

- **Locality**: Both young people and parents justified mobile phone use in relation to the area where they lived – rural locations being more remote, and urban locations having higher levels of crime and safety threats.

**Young people and internet use**

- Both parents and young people talked about the internet in relation to mobile phone use. Young people often used the internet rather than the mobile phone when at home, as it was cheaper, or free.

- Parents and young people also highlighted concerns about internet use – in particular contact with unknown people through chat-sites and friends’ sites. Several parents reported instances where their children had given out personal details, such as home addresses and mobile phone numbers.

- Fathers were particularly concerned about risks from the internet, and were more likely than mothers to check their child’s internet history.
General views: Young people and mobile phones

- Both young people and parents felt that mobile phones enhanced safety. They described mobiles as a ‘lifeline’, and a back-up safety measure. Though a few people did believe there was an increased risk in terms of mugging and bullying, most felt the benefits outweighed the negative points.
- The majority of parents did not feel that extra risks were taken by young people as a result of having mobile phones. The general consensus was that if people were going to take risks, they would do so regardless. A few described mobile phones as providing a ‘false sense of security’, but most considered mobile phones to be a positive influence.
- Young people felt considerable pressure to have mobile phones in general, and to have the ‘right kind’ of mobile.
- Overall, both parents and young people were wholly for young people having mobile phones. Safety came out as the top reason (including peace of mind for the parents), followed by ease of communication, independence, and for young people, social reasons – i.e. keeping up with friends.

Findings from the seven day ‘personal records’

- The results of the personal records generally supported the findings from the interviews with young people and parents.
- The younger age groups (11-12 year-olds) did not use their mobiles very often to communicate with parents during the course of the week.
- By age 13-14, there was much more ‘checking in’ between parents and young people using mobiles, particularly by girls. This pattern continued with the older age groups (15-17 year-olds) who also used their mobiles as a key part of their social lives.

5.2 General conclusions

This section considers, first, what the study has added to the literature, and second, offers some general reflections on the findings.

As described in Chapter 1, the study described in this report emerged out of previous TSA research (Stace and Roker, 2005). This study into parental monitoring and supervision in families found that mobile phones had a key role in family communication, and in keeping young people safe. This was one of many findings, however, and was not explored in detail. This study has focussed instead, solely on the role of mobile phones in family communication.

As shown in Chapter 1, there has been no in-depth qualitative research into British young people’s and parents’ use of mobile phones in family communication, particularly in relation to keeping young people safe. Though Ling (2000, 2001a) has produced some comprehensive work based on families and
young people in Norway, there is a notable lack of such work in the UK. Indeed, the two main British studies mentioned in Chapter 1 (Haste, 2005, and YouGov, 2006), though interesting, were limited in scope. Haste’s study showed the centrality of mobile phones in the lives of 11-25 year-olds. However, this study only involved young people’s perspectives, and not those of parents, and was limited to ‘tick box’ responses. Further, ‘The Mobile Life Report’ conducted by YouGov (2006) did not include the views of young people 18 and under.

In designing this study, we considered it important to embed the research into mobile phone use into broader patterns of family relationships and communication. Most of the families described parent-child relationships as generally good, with the usual ‘ups and downs’ that any family might go through. In relation to young people’s safety, it was significant that parents and young people had very similar views about risks to young people’s health and safety – theft and muggings, abduction, street violence, etc.

The decision to get a mobile for a young person was generally a shared one, with parents wanting young people to have a mobile from around the age of 11 or 12, as they would be out of the home more. This coincided in particular with the move to secondary school. It was also acknowledged that there was a certain amount of peer pressure to have a mobile phone at this age, and young people often experienced concerns about being ‘left out’. Almost all the young people had pay-as-you-go phones, in order to keep the costs manageable. Some young people paid for their own phones, whilst parents paid for some young people’s costs. Many parents saw owning a mobile phone as a good lesson in responsibility and financial management for young people, and part of their developing independence.

In terms of mobile phones and family communication, the findings support other work in this area (Ling, 2001, 2004; YouGov, 2006). Mobile phones were used regularly between parents and young people. They were most commonly used to make plans, confirm arrangements, and notify each other about changes in arrangements. Both young people and parents found them invaluable for this, with many describing it as a ‘lifeline’. Young people felt safer when they were out of the home if they had a mobile phone, and parents felt reassured that young people were safer and able to get help if they needed it.

There were some interesting generational differences in terms of mobile phone communication. Thus, for example, most parents preferred to speak to their son or daughter, rather than text (as found in other studies, for example YouGov, 2006). This was both because they felt reassured to hear a young person’s voice, but also because they found texting more difficult. Young people also considered parents (and those of their parents’ age) to be less competent at using mobile phones compared to younger people.

There were also some interesting findings in relation to privacy and mobile phones. The majority of young people – and parents – considered that young people’s mobiles were private and confidential. They did not feel it appropriate for parents to look at their texts or call list under any circumstances. Interestingly,
many participants described young people’s mobiles as like diaries, i.e. as a private and personal space. Only a small number of parents had looked at the details on their son or daughter’s phone, with and without their permission. A small number of young people reported their mobile phones as being completely private, but parents stated that they had looked at them. Where this was done, it was mainly because parents were worried about young people, and wanted to get more information about their friendships or activities.

As stated earlier, most young people and parents were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of mobiles. For young people they gave independence and ease of communication. For parents they saw mobiles as keeping young people safer, and offering them reassurance that young people had a ‘lifeline’ in an emergency. Despite these positive comments however, there were concerns raised – theft, muggings, bullying, the costs involved, and peer pressure to get new and more sophisticated phones. Interestingly, whilst young people and parents shared these concerns, they added two observations: First that in many cases the concerns were exaggerated, or involved young people being reckless and ‘showing off’. Second most young people and parents had a range of ‘hints and tips’ and suggestions for keeping safe. In this respect, most families had ‘adapted’ to incorporate this relatively new technology into their everyday safety strategies.

There were some interesting findings in the study in relation to social factors and mobile phone use. Interestingly, there were few differences in terms of a number of factors, including family socio-economic status, ethnicity, or family structure. However, there were more differences between participants in relation to three social influences – gender, age, and locality. The study found, first, notable differences in terms of gender. The females in the study were much more enthusiastic about their mobiles than the males, seeing them as a key part of their personal, family, and social lives. This reflects the findings of previous research (Lohan, 1997; Lorente, 2002; Campell, 2006) described earlier. The males in the study had a much more practical approach to their mobile phones, generally seeing them as purely functional, enabling them to contact friends and family about meeting times, plans, etc.

Compared to the gender differences above, age did not emerge as a particularly significant factor in the study. Parents’ age was considered important by many, with parents generally being seen as less competent in using mobile phones. These comments were often embedded in broader views about the ‘digital divide’, and young people being much more knowledgeable about, and competent with, new technologies in general. In terms of young people’s ages, the 14-17 year-olds in the study increasingly used their mobile phones, as they were away from the family home more. Thus mobile phone use seemed to reflect the patterns in young people’s growing moves towards independence. There was also a suggestion from some young people and parents that the current generation is more independent than previous generations because of mobile phones – i.e. young people can go further away from the family home, travel more independently, and go to new places, because they are considered to be safer with a mobile phone. This was particularly the case with parents who had both
older and younger children, and who often compared the change in their parenting styles with the advent of mobile phones.

Finally, we explored for any influences of locality on the role of mobile phones in family communication. Interestingly, both young people and parents in rural and in urban locations justified mobile phone use based on locality. For those in rural areas, mobile phones were considered essential because of remoteness, and needing to organise transport. For those in urban areas, it was because of what was seen as the greater risks in those areas – street crime, etc.

To conclude this discussion, this study has revealed new information about the role of mobile phones in family communication. Overall, parents and young people saw mobile phones as an essential feature of modern life – for convenience, for safety, for managing family life and social lives. Whilst aware of any issues or concerns about mobile phones, all the participants felt that the benefits were much more numerous and significant. Mobile phones were seen as a key part of modern family life.

5.3 Implications and next steps

In concluding this report, we describe how the research could be used, and identify areas for future research.

The results of this study could be utilised in a variety of ways. The authors consider that the findings could be translated into materials for both young people and parents. In relation to parents, it would be useful to produce short ‘information sheets’ for parents based on this research. This could include the ‘hints and tips’ that parents in the study described, focussing on keeping young people safe whilst out of the home, and while using mobile phones.

In particular, we feel that the research could be used to produce educational materials, focussing on how young people can use mobile phones more safely, and – more broadly – how young people can keep themselves safe and reduce risk. These materials could be in the form of a guide or training resource, and could be used by practitioners in schools, colleges, youth settings, etc. They could include, for example, the comments from young people in the research about ‘safe phone’ behaviour, including non-conspicuous use, not using mobiles for too long, telling parents and/or school about bullying texts, etc. These hints could be built into discussions, role plays, and exercises, thus bringing the research to life for use in the classroom.

Finally, further research is suggested, based on the findings of this report. The following topics should be explored in the future:

- This research has described patterns of mobile phone communication between young people and their parents. The research also hinted at a range of issues in mobile phone communication between young people and their friends – this issue has not been explored using qualitative
methods. A key area for future research is how young people use mobiles to communicate and maintain friendships and romantic relationships.

- There is little information available about how young people use their mobiles to get information and advice, for example in relation to practical issues (such as careers information) or more sensitive issues (such as sexual health advice). However, a number of young people’s organisations are now providing information and advice in this way, for example by text. Despite this, there have been few evaluations of such projects, or research to highlight good practice. This is an important area for future research.

- This study explored patterns of mobile phone use retrospectively, by asking young people about their past patterns of use. In addition, however, the authors used a diary methodology, to look at the realities of mobile phone use over the course of seven days. It is considered that a more detailed study of mobile phone use over time, using a broader range of methodologies, would be useful. This could include, for example, diaries completed over a one month period, or using texts to prompt young people to record their mobile phone use over the last 24 hours. This would provide much more detailed information than is currently available about the realities of young people’s mobile worlds.

In conclusion, this research has provided new and valuable information about the role of mobile phones in families with teenagers in the UK. As technologies develop and become more widespread, the issues raised in this report will become even more significant in families’ lives.
REFERENCES


Ling, R (2000) “We will be reached”: The use of Mobile Telephony among Norwegian Youth. Information Technology and People, 13, 2A.


Livingstone and Bober (2002) UK children go online: Listening to young people’s experiences. Swindon: ESRC.


APPENDICES

The following appendices are included:

- Appendix A – Young people’s interview schedule
- Appendix B – Parents’ interview schedule
- Appendix C – Layout of the personal records
Appendix A

Young people’s interview schedule

Family Relationships

This first section of questions is just to help us learn more about your relationship with your parents.

How much time do you usually spend with your parents? Are you in most evenings, at the weekend? (If not) What else are you doing?

Do you and your parents talk to each other a lot? Why is this?

What do you usually talk about (functional issues – plans, arrangements etc/ emotional personal issues/ anything and everything)?

Has this changed in recent years? Why is this?

Whereabouts and activities

The next set of questions are about how you organise plans and arrangements in with your parents. They also look at communication and safety issues.

Do you tell your parents without prompting about where you are going and what you are doing?

Do your parents ask you directly about what you are doing and where you are going?

Does anyone else tell your parents about what you are doing and where you are going?

Do you have to have permission from your parents to go out, or to do certain activities?

Do your parents trust you to tell them where they are going what they will be doing?

Have you ever told your parents that you were going, doing, and/or spending time with someone and you didn’t? If yes, did they find out, and how did they react?
Do your parents have any general safety worries for you? What do you think they are? E.g. (Stranger danger, traffic/travel, friends/relationships that your parents do not approve of etc)

As you are aware, this study is mainly looking at how families use mobile phones in communicating with, and keeping their child safe. The following sections will explore how your family uses mobile phones, and whether you think they do help families communicate better, and keep young people safer.

**How are mobile phones used in the family?**

The following questions are to help us get a better idea about how much, and in what ways, mobile phones feature in your family life.

How many people have mobile phones in your household? Who are they?

How often do you use your mobile phone? Is it more for speaking to mates or to your parents?

If you have more than one mobile phone, how often do you use each one?

Do you have a pay-as-you-go phone or a contract? Why is this? Who usually pays?

Do your parents contact you on your mobile phone? If yes, who usually contacts who first? Is this contact usually by speaking, by text or both?

What are the kind of things you would talk to your parents about using a mobile phone (either by text or by actually speaking)? For example:
- Arrangements and plans with the family
- Whereabouts and activities outside of the family
- Emotional/health/general issues
- Anything and everything

Have you ever turned your phone off, or not answered a call from your parents? Why did you do this? What happened as a result?

Do you have a house phone? (If yes) Do you prefer to use the house phone or your mobile? Why is this? (Privacy issues, expense, ease of contact etc)

**How do parents use mobiles to contact their children?**

The next set of questions will explore how you use mobile phones in communicating with your parents.

What for you are the benefits of mobile phones in regards to keeping in contact with your parents? For example:
- Ease of communication
- Having an immediate point of contact
- Additional safety measure
- Increased independence for you
- Access to the Internet (email communication)
- Other

How regularly do you and your parents use mobile phones to contact each other?

Do you mostly text or speak to your parents using your mobile phone? Why is this?

Are you happy to use your mobile to keep in contact with your parents? Do you ever get embarrassed if they call you when you are out, perhaps with friends?

What is the most common method of communication you and your parents have so that they know where you are, and what you are doing? (Face-to-face, phone, email etc)

Do you know if your parents have ever looked at your mobile phone to find out numbers or read text messages to find out where you are?

Do your parents prefer you to always have a mobile phone with you when you go out? Why is this? Does this always happen?

Have your parents ever taken away your mobile phone as a punishment? Why was this? What happened as a result?

Has anyone else removed your phone as a punishment (other parent, partner, school teacher etc)? How did you feel about this?

**Concerns about mobile phone use**

Do you have any of the following concerns about using mobile phones?

- Theft/mugging (of the phone)
- Bullying/ "Happy Slapping" (using the phone – text, calling)
- Expense
- Media influence/ peer pressure - Competition with other people’s phones – comparing speed, style, accessories etc.
- Health issues (excessive use, long-term effects of using mobiles etc)
- Other

Has there ever been an incident where a negative event has happened because of you having a mobile phone? (If yes) Can you tell me more about this?

What happened as a result of this incident?
Influence of social factors on mobile phone usage

Do the following factors effect how you use your mobile phone?

Gender?
- Your gender? (E.g. Do you think girls should have phones more than boys, or boys should have them more than girls – why is this?)

Age?
- Your parents’ age? (E.g. Are your parents familiar with mobile phones? Have they always had one – as far as you are aware?)
- Your age? (E.g. Are your parents less concerned to contact you as you get older? Do you think you have more independence at a younger age because you have a mobile phone – perhaps compared to an older brother or sister?)

Area?
- Safety issues/crime? (E.g. is your area safe/ unsafe – do your parents like to be in more or less contact with you because of this?)

Internet use

We are also interested to learn about other ways you use technology. The final set of questions look at how you use the Internet.

Do you have the Internet available at home? Do you have access to it?

Do you have access to the Internet anywhere else?

What do you usually look at using the Internet? (MSN, email, Internet browsing, chat-rooms, etc)

Who do you usually communicate with using the Internet?

How much time do you spend on the Internet? Are you happy about the amount of time they spend using the Internet?

Where is the computer in your house? Do you parents check on you when you use it?

Do you or your parents have any concerns about you using the Internet? E.G.

- Meeting people in chat-rooms, maybe giving out personal details
- Making your child more secretive, less communicative with the family
- Not participating in other activities, chores around the house
- Playing too many computer games

Have you ever being stopped from using the Internet as a punishment? If so, why was this? What happened as a result?

**General feelings about use of mobile phones**

And finally, a few questions about your general feelings about using mobile phones?

Are you generally for or against young people having mobile phones? Why is this?

Do you think young people feel pressured to have mobile phones these days? Why is this?

Do you think mobile phones generally enhance safety for young people, or put them more at risk? Why is this?

Do you think young people take more risks because of having a phone i.e. a false sense of security? Why is this?

Is there anything else you would like to add about how parents or young people use their mobile phones to stay in contact with each other?
Appendix B

Parents’ Interview Schedule

Family relationships

This first section of questions is just to help us learn more about your relationship with your child.

How much time do you usually spend with your child? Are they in most evenings, at the weekend? (If not) What else are they doing?

Do you and your child talk to each other a lot? Why is this?

What do you usually talk about (functional issues – plans, arrangements etc/ emotional personal issues/ anything and everything)?

Has this changed in recent years? Why is this?

What do parents know about their child’s whereabouts and activities

The next set of questions are about how you organise plans and arrangements with your child. They also look at communication and safety issues.

Does your child tell you without prompting about where they are going and what they are doing?

Do you ask your child directly about what they do and where they go?

Do you speak to anyone else to find out where your child goes or what they do?

Does your child have to have your permission to go out, or to do certain activities?

Do you trust your child when they tell you where they are going what they will be doing?

Has your child ever told you they were going, doing, and/or spending time with someone and you have found out they didn’t? If yes, how did you find out, and how did you react when you found out?

Do you have any general safety worries for your child when they are not with you? (Stranger danger, traffic/ travel, unsuitable friends etc)
As you are aware, this study is mainly looking at how families use mobile phones in communicating with, and keeping their child safe. The following sections will explore how your family uses mobile phones, and what your views are about their usefulness in communicating with, and ensuring the safety of your child.

**How are mobile phones used in the family?**

How many people have mobile phones in your household? Who are they?

How often are mobile phones generally used by the family to communicate with each other? (E.g. A few times a day, once a day, every now and then, etc)

Have you had to learn how to use mobiles/ text etc in order to stay in better communication with your child? I.e. have you had to change your own phone behaviour to match your child’s?

When did your child first get a mobile phone? Was it given to them by you? Was this in connection with any other events (starting secondary school, going on an oversees trip, birthday, because they nagged you for one, because of separation of parents – parent wanting direct contact with child, not communicating via other parent etc)

Does your child have a pay-as-you-go or a contract? Why is this? Who usually pays? (Tease out issues to do with responsibility – i.e. budgeting, handling own finances)

Does your child communicate with you via their mobile? If yes, who usually initiates the communication? Is this communication usually by speaking, by text or both?

What are the kind of things you would talk to your child about using a mobile phone (either by text or by actually speaking)? For example:

- Arrangements and plans with the family
- Whereabouts and activities outside of the family
- Emotional/health/general issues
- Anything and everything

Has your child ever turned their phone off, or deliberately not answered a call to you (that you know of)? Why was this? What happened as a result?

Do you have a house phone? If yes, does your child prefer to use the house phone or their mobile? Why is this? (Privacy issues, expense, ease of contact etc)

**How do parents use mobiles to monitor and supervise their child?**
The next set of questions will explore how you use mobile phones in communicating with and monitoring your child.

What for you are the benefits of mobile phones in monitoring your child’s whereabouts? For example:

- Ease of communication
- Having an immediate point of contact
- Additional safety measure
- Access to Internet (email communication)
- Increased independence for your child
- Other

How regularly do you and your child contact each other using mobile phone?

Do you mostly text or speak to your child using their mobile phone? Why is this?

Is your child happy to use his/her mobile to keep in contact with you? Do they ever get embarrassed/ annoyed if you call them when they are out (perhaps with friends)?

What is the most common method of communication you and your child have so that you know where they are, and what they are doing? (Face-to-face, phone, email etc)

Have you ever looked at your child’s mobile phone to check received or dialled numbers you are not sure about, or ever read your child’s text messages to find out where they are, or what they are doing? If yes, why was this?

Do you prefer your child to always have a mobile phone with them? Why is this? Does this always happen?

Have you ever removed your child’s mobile phone as a punishment? Why was this? What happened as a result?

Has anyone else removed your child’s phone as a punishment (other parent, partner, school teacher etc)? How did you feel about this?

Do you consider your child’s mobile to be just THEIR thing, their responsibility/property? Why is this?

**Concerns about mobile phone use**

Do you have any of the following concerns about your child using mobile phones…? (Ask these things in turn as parents usually have opinions on most)

- Theft/mugging (of the phone)
- Bullying/ “Happy Slapping” (using the phone – text, calling)
- Having easy communication with friends you do not know, or are unhappy about your child knowing
- Unmonitored Internet use (for contract phones)
- Making your child more secretive, less communicative with the family
- Expense
- Media influence - Pester for updated phones – wanting newer, better, more games/ styles etc
- Health issues (excessive use, long-term effects of using mobiles etc)
- Other

Has there ever been an incident where a negative event has happened because of your child having a mobile phone? (If yes) Can you tell me more about this?

What happened as a result of this incident?

Influence of social factors on mobile phone usage

Do the following factors effect how you use your mobile phone to communicate with, and monitor your child?

Gender

- Child’s gender as a son/daughter? (E.g. Do you perhaps monitor your daughter more than your son using their mobile phone? Are you happier to let your daughter out at night because she has a phone?)

Age

- Child’s age? (E.g. Do you think you have given your child more independence at an earlier age as they have a mobile and you can more easily contact them?)

Area

- Safety issues/crime? (E.g. Do you wish to stay in easier contact with your child because of the area you live in?)

Internet use

We are also interested to learn about other ways you use technology. The final set of questions look at how you use the Internet.

Do you have the Internet available at home? Does your child have access to it?

Does your child have access to the Internet anywhere else?

What do they usually look at using the Internet? (MSN, email, Internet browsing, chat-rooms, etc)
How much time does your child spend on the Internet? Are you happy about the amount of time they spend using the Internet?

Where is the computer in your house? Do you monitor their use of the Internet?

Do you have any concerns about your child using the Internet? E.G.

- Meeting people in chat-rooms, maybe giving out personal details
- Making your child more secretive, less communicative with the family
- Not participating in other activities, chores around the house
- Playing too many computer games

Have you ever stopped your child using the Internet as a punishment? If so, why was this? What happened as a result?

**General feelings about young people and use of mobile phones**

And finally, a few questions about your general feelings about using mobile phones?

Do you think mobile phones generally enhance safety for young people, or put them more at risk? Why is this?

Do you think young people take more risks because of having a phone i.e. a false sense of security? Why is this?

Overall, are you for or against young people having mobile phones? Why is this?

Is there anything else you would like to add about how parents or young people use their mobile phones to stay in contact with each other?
Appendix C

Layout of the personal records

(Front page – for young people and parents)

‘Mobile Phones and Keeping Young People Safe’ Project

Personal Record

Today’s Date:…………………..
Family Code:…………………. 
What is the Personal Record?

The Personal Record is to help us find out more about how you use your mobile phone. We want to find out:

- how much you use your phone
- who you usually call or text
- what topics you discuss
- how much you contact your parents, friends, and other people

The questions are very brief, and will not take up much of your time!

The next page tells you how to fill in the Personal Record.
**How Do I Fill in my Personal Record?**

There are seven days in this Personal Record for you to complete. For each day there are six questions to answer.

**What do I have to do?**

- Complete the Personal Record at the end of each day.
- By the end of the seven days you should have Day 1 to Day 7 filled in.
- When you have filled in all seven days, send the Personal Record back to Kerry at TSA, in the pre-paid envelope provided – it doesn’t need a stamp.

**Things to keep in mind:**

- There are no right or wrong answers – at the end of the day we want to learn from you.
- The Personal Record is confidential – only the people doing the research will see it. No one will know your name or see what you have written.
And Finally

Was this a typical week for you and your family? Please answer in the space below.

Is there anything else you want to say about the last seven days, or about the project? Please answer in the space below.

Thank you for filling in the Personal Record.  
It is much appreciated.
If you want to talk about the project, or are not sure what to write or how to fill in the Personal Record, please feel free to contact Kerry at TSA.

TSA Tel: 01273 647332
Email: kdevitt@tsa.uk.com

Or you can write to Kerry Devitt at:

The Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA)
FREEPOST Licence NO. BR7316
23 New Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 1WZ

[The following pages show an example of the day-by-day layout of the records. These differed for parents and for young people. There were seven pages in total using the format shown overleaf—one for each day of the week. The first example is a copy of a page from the young people’s records. The second is from the parents’ records]
**DAY ONE**

What day of the week is it? .............................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who did you call today? (Please say how many times)</th>
<th>Friends (Including girlfriends and boyfriends)</th>
<th>Family (other than parents)</th>
<th>Other (Please say what)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who did you text today? (Please say how many times)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you call or text this person?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who called you today? (Please say how many times)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who texted you today? (Please say how many times)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did this person call or text you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you avoid any calls today, or not answer any texts that were sent to you? (If yes, please say why)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# DAY ONE

What day of the week is it? ........................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many calls did you receive from your child today?</th>
<th>.......................................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many texts did you receive from your child today?</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did your child call or text you about? (E.g. Family arrangements, plans outside the family, asking permission to see friends, general questions etc)</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many calls did you make to your child today?</th>
<th>.......................................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many texts did you send to your child today?</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you call or text your child about? (E.g. Family arrangements, plans outside the family, saying you were going to be late, finding out where your child was/ when they were going to be home etc)</td>
<td>.......................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>