



RSITY

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Executive summary

The research project was conducted in Sussex in partnership with three charities that support Unaccompanied Children and Young People (UCYP). The study aimed to understand how UCYP use digital

Introduction

In 2022, by September the UK received 5,152 applications for asylum from unaccompanied children (Refugee Council, 2022). An Unaccompanied Child is a child under 18 who has arrived in a country seeking asylum without a parent or legal guardian to care for them. They are entitled to special protections under international and national law (Refugee Council, 2022). In this report we use the term Unaccompanied Children and Young People (UCYP), rather than the more commonly used Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). We prefer this term as it reflects the status of these children when they arrive in the UK and should be treated as such (Kaukko 2016). At the same time, scholars such as Vergara-Figueroa (2018) have noted the problematic status of the term UASC, as it encompasses terms that seek to categorise forcibly

Human Rights organisations have stated that the Nationality and Border Bill has severe

2018). Social media platforms are typically ~~used~~ ^{web} and accessible through desktop and mobile devices. Examples of popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. ~~According to studies,~~ ^{the} use of social media on personal mobile devices like smartphones has improved connections between recently arrived refugees (Pottie et al., 2020).

individuals and groups to take control of their own lives and to address social issues affecting them (Fine and Torres, 2021).

Throughout the PAR design sessions, the researchers modelled the SHOWed method by analysing different artefacts they chose to share with the group. This was later replicated, to some degree, within the workshops with UCYP, where the researcher used visual methods such as PowerPoint, and images to stimulate discussion with the young people and model creative facilitation methods. Notwithstanding, when the researchers facilitated the workshops, some of the young people did not want to engage with creative or drawing activities. This served as an important learning for the whole research team. The young women who were reluctant to engage with the creative approaches shepherded and preferred instead co-constructed research spaces of opened discussion. As a team, we reflected that more time needed to have been allocated towards designing the research

The jam boards served as a way of keeping conversations flowing, which was helpful as the research team members were all based in different locations.

Google Jamboard was also a useful app in supporting the design of the project. At the outset, the coresearchers decided that they did not want an Advisory Group which included

were also available in Arabic, Dari and Pashto enable young people to answer in the language of their choice.

- x Online questionnaire for care providers: These would be anonymous and distributed via email through our networks. The findings would be shared with the UCYP in the workshops to provoke discussion.
- x Key informant interviews with young people: This was decided after the initial data analysis phase, to gain a deeper understanding of some of the issues.

The coresearchers highlighted that the workshop sessions were an opportunity to raise awareness about online safety with the young people. The workshops were then expanded to include a small section which focuses on the need to critically analyse online sources and strategies for minimising risk of harm. In this way the data collection process evolved into a discussion and interaction (Maguire 1987, p. 29).

Fieldnotes from one of the sessions noted:

His PowerPoint slides added reciprocity to the research process by raising issues about online safety. Participants listened carefully about the importance of online privacy and keeping profiles private, the importance of in-person social interactions and not just online. He explained about dimming the brightness on your phone at night to improve sleep and not keeping the phone plugged in beside your bed.

Research sites

The research was primarily conducted in Sussex, in partnership with three charities that support UCYP.

[Enthum House](#) A UK registered charity that provides a safe and sustainable home to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged 16.

[The Black & Minority Ethnic Community Partners \(BMECP\)](#) BMECP is a community organisation and hub in Brighton and Hove that supports BME communities and their families, including UCYP. Within the BMECP hub, Sutton and District Training (SDT) offer English language classes to UCYP. One of the researchers shared the research project with SDT, who agreed to act as a gatekeeper organisation, and connect us with the UCYP who used their services.

The [Hummingbird Project](#) is a Brighton based charity, also located within the BMECP, that works with young asylum seekers and refugees in the area & campaigns nationally.

In addition, three key informant interviews were conducted in Canterbury, Kent where one of the coresearchers lived and worked.

[Survey with care providers](#) The collaboratively designed online survey for care providers was

Ethical considerations

In this study, the research team sought to mitigate risks through the designed nature of

These considerations are central to equitable approaches to research design, and underline a more ethical approach to research, affording multiple opportunities for engagement and reciprocity.

PAR is founded on principles of collaboration and partnership, and it seeks to build relationships of trust and respect between researchers and participants. By involving the research process, PAR prioritises their wellbeing and autonomy and can ensure that their needs and concerns are taken seriously. It is therefore a more ethical approach and, by prioritising the wellbeing and autonomy of the participants, PAR can ensure that the research is conducted ethically and responsibly.

Analysing the data

The research team met to collaboratively analyse the data. The data analysis process involved multiple steps:

- Data organisation: Prior to the data analysis workshop, the data was collated in google drive. Different members of the research team contributed to transcribing interviews and focus group discussions, translating surveys, compiling survey responses, and organising any other relevant data
- Data coding: During the meeting the research team began the process of coding the data. This involved assigning labels or tags to sections of the data related to specific themes or concepts, such as wellbeing. This process helped to identify patterns and relationships in the data that would inform the research findings.
- Data interpretation: After some of the data had been coded, the research team engaged in a process of interpretation. This involved discussing and reflecting on the coded data to identify key themes, patterns, and insights that emerged from the data.
- Collaborative analysis: The research team worked together to analyse the data and develop conclusions based on their collective interpretation of the findings. This involved:
 - o Reviewing the coded data together, discussing key themes and insights, and identifying areas of agreement and disagreement. It was also an opportunity to see gaps in the research. Based on this, it was decided that further key informant interviews with UCYP were needed, to explore some of the emerging issues in more depth.
 - o Refinement of findings: Following the meeting the research fellow continued to refine the findings based on ongoing analysis and discussion. This involved revisiting the data, using NVIVO 12 to tag the data, identifying additional themes, and honing the conclusions drawn from the research.
- Deciding how to disseminate the findings: The research team discussed how to share the research findings and with whom. It was decided to share the findings with a group of Hummingbird Young Leaders, also from UCYP groups. The research team decided that creating a film, with the Young Leaders discussing the findings would be a great way to raise awareness of the findings as well as creating a resource that could be shared via social media for young people and carers. The researchers wrote a script based on the findings which was shared with a group of Young Leaders (2)

female and (4) male. A videographer, with lived experience of being from a UCYP background, was contracted to oversee the filmmaking workshops

Some of the care providers identified potential risks associated with their online engagement. This included vulnerability to exploitation and radicalisation, disassociation with the "real" world, fake or false friendship groups/news, money scams, tracking exploitation by agents or smugglers, trafficking concerns, and possible manipulation with wrong information access.

Figure 5

Figure 5 displays a bar chart showing the percentage of young people who use social media and digital resources differently to other young people, stating that they faced additional risks due to their vulnerable situation. The chart compares the usage of various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp) across different groups of young people. The Y-axis represents the percentage of young people, ranging from 0% to 100%. The X-axis lists the platforms. The data shows that WhatsApp is the most commonly used platform, followed by Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Snapchat.

As highlighted in Figure 6, overall, foster carers, social workers and teachers felt that UCYP might use social media and digital resources differently to other young people, stating that they faced additional risks due to their vulnerable situation.

Figure 6

Figure 6 displays a bar chart showing the percentage of foster carers, social workers and teachers who felt that UCYP might use social media and digital resources differently to other young people, stating that they faced additional risks due to their vulnerable situation. The chart compares the usage of various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp) across different groups of young people. The Y-axis represents the percentage of young people, ranging from 0% to 100%. The X-axis lists the platforms. The data shows that WhatsApp is the most commonly used platform, followed by Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Snapchat.

However, many also emphasised that all young people were exposed to risky situations online

Interestingly, many of the young people mentioned that they used apps like WhatsApp, but not necessarily always to connect with friends that they had made in the UK. Thys

placed in detention in the asylum system in other parts of the UK, or relatives that they have become separated from on the journey. Notwithstanding, some participants were unable to connect with their families who were either back in their country of origin or who they had been separated from. For example, one participant, from Afghanistan stated:

³, K D Y H Q R W E H H Q D E O H W R F R O W E D A F W H Y K O M E D D A I W H U V
safer place, and I do not have their addresses or contact numbers or even social media
D F F R X Q W V '

This highlights that although most young people use social media to stay in contact, depending on the situation in their country of origin, for others, it is not a possibility. In those cases, social media is often used to try and find missing friends or family members.

2. Using social media to connect with people in the UK:

Two of the interviewees shared that they used social media to make new friends and connect with people in the UK. They mostly used WhatsApp and Instagram to stay in touch with their friends, and they occasionally played games together. Both of these participants Z v] v š Z h < (} Ć } À Ć Ć Ć U Á Z] Z • μ P P • š • š Z š h z W change. In the workshops, many of the young people stated that they used social media % Ć] u Ć] o Ć š } } v v š Á] š Z % } % o I Z } u U n j w o u l d Ć Á Z š Á I Ć (} Ć (μ Ć š Z Ć Ć • Ć Z •] • Á Z š Z Ć Ć } μ v P % } % o [•] v š Ć the longer they stayed in the UK.

3. Limited use of social media for news and information:

Two of the interviewees highlighted the importance of engaging in physical activities to limit their social media use. Y advised young people to not waste their precious time on things that do not give them anything and to engage with people around them. Similarly, X suggested doing sports like football, cricket, volleyball, and gym to avoid excessive use of social media.

5. Young people do not think that they use social media differently than other groups

To triangulate the reflections from the care providers, many of whom were unsure if UCYP used social media differently from other groups, the interviewees were asked to reflect on whether they thought asylum seekers and refugees used social media differently. All three were unsure. As one interviewee pointed out:

↑ don't think there is a big difference between the ~~asylum~~ asylum seekers young people

Overall summary of findings

The research study explored the use of social media and digital resources by UCYP and the potential risks associated with their online engagement. The findings from surveys, workshops, and key informant interviews revealed that UCYP use digital technology primarily to communicate with family and friends, to stay updated with news and information, and for distraction and amusement. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were identified as the most used social media channels. Some of the benefits of social media use included learning new skills, language, and cooking, as well as staying connected with friends and family. However, excessive use of social media was linked to negative effects such as eye strain, headaches, and a negative impact on mental health and well-being. Some participants said that even when they go out to meet with friends that they all tended to spend time on their phones rather than chatting together.

The study also identified potential risks associated with UCYP's online engagement, due to many of the young people not having used social media prior to arrival in the UK. In discussing the findings with the researchers, they noted that many young people had an increased vulnerability to exploitation, disassociation with the "real" world due to their excessive use of social media, the potential for fake or false friendship groups/news, and the possibility of becoming victims of money scams, and possible manipulation with wrong information access.

In the case illustrated by the care provider, UCYP were more susceptible to tracking and exploitation by agents or smugglers, with real trafficking concerns. Some care providers expressed concerns about UCYP's excessive use of social media, while others felt that they spent an average amount of time online. This could be because social media and digital resources can provide positive outcomes and connectedness for UCYP when balanced with other activities and interactions.

The research study revealed that some UCYP use social media and digital resources differently from other young people and that they face additional risks due to their vulnerable status. Care providers identified positive aspects of social media and digital resources in the lives of UCYP, such as communicating with friends and family, accessing websites from their home countries, supporting identity, resources for language learning, live worship from the mosque, socialising with friends, news of and connections with their home country, feeling closer to their homeland and friends, and finding information.

In summary, the study highlights the importance of understanding how UCYP use social media and digital resources, the potential risks associated with their online engagement, and the positive outcomes and connectedness that social media and digital resources can provide when used in a balanced way. It highlights the significance of digital technology and social media for UCYP, indicating the importance of maintaining social connections, learning, and identity development. At the same time, the study highlights the potential risks associated with the online engagement of UCYP, emphasising the need for caregivers to support them in developing safe and responsible digital behaviours.

The findings suggest the need for tailored guidance and support to promote safe and responsible use of social media and digital resources among UCYP.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research study on unaccompanied and separated refugee children and young people (UCYP), the following are the main recommendations for care providers, young people, and areas for future research:

Recommendations for Care providers:

The study revealed that most care providers recognize the benefits of social media and digital resources in the lives of UCYP, including communicating with friends and family, accessing websites from their home countries, language learning, and socialising with friends. However, care providers also had concerns about potential risks associated with online engagement, such as exploitation, radicalisation, trafficking, and fake news. Therefore, it is recommended that care providers need to monitor and support the UCYP in their use of digital technology and social media to prevent and manage any potential risks. This could be supported by:

- a) Providing education on safe internet usage, and raising awareness of potential risks, such as exploitation and radicalisation, and providing training on how to identify and report these risks.
- b) Encouraging a balanced approach to technology use, promoting offline interactions, physical activities, and other hobbies and interests.
- c) Fostering an open dialogue with young people about their online activities, encouraging them to share their experiences and concerns.
- d) Helping UCYP to access online resources that can assist in their integration, such as language learning apps and tools, and support their use of social media to stay connected with family and friends.

Recommendations for Young People:

The study showed that UCYP use social media primarily for communication with friends and family, amusement, and to stay updated with news and information. The excessive use of social media was associated with negative effects such as eye strain, headaches, negative impact on studies, as well as respondents report] TJ ET f3(u)-4(se)9 [(Th)-7(is)G news a

social media in moderation, balancing their online engagement with other activities and interactions.

- a) Be aware of the potential risks associated with excessive use of social media and digital technology and seek support when necessary.
- b) Use digital technology and social media to stay connected with family and friends, so as to learn new skills, such as language learning.
- c) Be mindful of the impact of social media use on mental health and take breaks when necessary.
- d) Encourage each other to put phones down and do something different, e.g. sports or other physical activities, focus on studies, or arrange to meet in person.

Recommendations for future research:

1. The study revealed that UCYP use social media more in the UK than in their home countries for several factors including the availability of internet and WiFi in the UK, the high cost of internet in their home countries, having less to occupy their time within the UK, and the fact that they have become physically separated from family and friends. Future research could explore the relationship between the availability of internet and WiFi and UCYP's social media use, as well as the potential implications of this on their social and emotional well-being.
2. Furthermore, an examination of the relationship between social media use and academic performance, would provide UCYP and educators with key tools and apps that could support them to thrive within the UK education system. However, there is little information on the negative effects of constant social media usage of UCYP, especially if it results in disengagement from their new environment. Further investigation into the role of social media and digital technology in the integration of UCYP into host communities could yield more depth insight and support the development of guidelines for caregivers and strategies for UCYP for promoting positive outcomes.
3. Our research did not ask about how phones and digital technology were used by UCYP during their journeys to the UK or about ongoing contact with people who had facilitated their access to the UK. In the light of children going missing from hotels this is a critical area of further research.

4. To overcome a limitation of this pilot study, it would be beneficial to consider how various factors such as vulnerability and privilege can affect a young person's use of social media and digital resources. By examining the usage patterns of different subgroups of UCYP, such as females, specific ethnic groups or educational

Annexe 1

Call for participants, designed by researchers and research fellow



Annexe 2

Sample workshop

Before the workshop

- x Facilitators would have held an introductory session (30 minutes) to inform participants about the research and/or share information sheet/poster about the research
- x Informed consent forms shared, read out loud and signed.
- x Ask participants to share their favourite song

Workshop overview

This is a sample of a workshop. Remember, we only will have time for activities. The icebreaker, ground rules and caregiver feedback are compulsory but you can change/edit/improvise the other activity ideas. Look at the UNHCR listen and learn guidebook for ideas to adapt to our research questions.

[UNHCR Listen & Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents](#)

Phase	Facilitator	Student activity	Time	Materials needed
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Activity 2 Photo Voice	SHOWed method (go through the questions)	Young people share a photo that represents what social media means to them	25 minutes	You will need to inform young people prior to the session to pick a photo that represents what social media means to them/what they like/their favourite site. You might also want to start by sharing a photo. This could be printed so that everyone can see and analyse it together. You could use a photo of someone in school uniform for example, to start a conversation around safety and identifiable info on the web
Activity 3				
Activity 4 Survey/questionnaire	Share link to the anonymised survey (still to be developed)	Young people complete the survey. As discussed, this should be short max 5 questions with checkboxes/emojis etc.	10 minute survey	Survey link
Certificates, vouchers, food and party time	Thank everyone for participating. Give the participants their certificate and voucher. Start the music play list and bring out the food.			Certificates £25 vouchers

