Childnet International's response to the consultation on the Reform of the National Curriculum in England.

Introduction:

Childnet is a registered charity working with children, young people, teachers, parents and carers, government and policy makers to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. Set up in 1995, Childnet is an independent organisation that seeks to promote the positive use of technology and highlight the positive things that children are doing with new technology, as well as responding to the potential negative side.

Childnet's Education Team have for the past ten years worked on a regular basis in both primary and secondary schools across the UK, conducting targeted comprehensive sessions on e-safety and positive use of ICT technologies as well as considering the risks that school age users may encounter and designing and developing resources to promote safety.

Childnet has produced a range of successful and award winning resources designed to empower the whole school community. In particular, Childnet has previously worked closely with the DoE/DCSF/DfE, BECTA and the TDA on strategic educational projects including the award winning 'Know IT All' suite of resources for primary, for secondary, for parents, and for NQTs and Trainee teachers – over 2 million copies of the KIA for parents CDRom resource were requested and distributed to schools across the UK.

In January 2011, Childnet was appointed by the European Commission to be a partner in the UK's Safer Internet Centre. As part of the Safer Internet Day (SID) 2013 activities, Childnet spoke to over 24,000 children and young people about their online rights and responsibilities, and held focus groups with 90 of these young people across the UK to further explore the findings. The right to be educated about staying safe online was voted in the top 10 rights on both the primary and secondary surveys. Evidence from this 'Have Your Say' survey has been included in this response. The full findings can be accessed at:

www.saferinternet.org.uk/downloads/Safer_Internet_Day/2013/Have_your_Say_survey_-_Full_Report.pdf

Childnet responded to the April 2011 Curriculum Review and the response can be found at: http://www.childnet.com/ufiles/110413%20National%20curriculum%20review%20response%20form%20Childnet%20International%20(FINAL).pdf. In our submission to the 2008 Byron Review, we firmly stated our conviction that the key universal point of access in engaging with children in managing the potential and actual risks of engaging with the Internet is through schools, and the curriculum enables this to have wider more consistent coverage. We see it as crucial that the subject of e-safety is integrated into the formal curriculum both within primary and secondary schools and also within the initial teacher training and school staff continual professional development programmes. Childnet believe that this would help to facilitate an integrated, universal approach to educating and empowering children to use the Internet and mobile phones safely. Our view has not changed, and the move over the following years toward more mobile and personal devices makes the importance of education even greater, as children need to be able to make good decisions whenever and wherever they access the internet.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the proposed aims for the National Curriculum as a whole as set out in the framework document?

As an internet safety charity, Childnet's response to this consultation is very focused on the need for the provision of safety education. Using the internet and new technology safely and responsibly is a fundamental skill, and this skill is a pre-requisite to being a confident and able 'digital citizen'. In order to be effective digital citizens, **all** children need to be able to look after themselves, look after their peers and be able to contribute and participate safely with the wider community. For example, if we want to tackle cyberbullying, the best way to go is to educate and raise responsible digital citizens. The national curriculum ensures that all children are taught the same things, and thus provides a crucial opportunity to ensure that all children receive the support they need to become effective digital citizens, a vital skill for future life in employment and for positive engagement in society.

As a "national" curriculum we would hope that these skills would be statutory for all pupils. It is important to recognise that including e-safety in the curriculum as an important step, but that challenges still remain to secure the equal and universal provision of e-safety teaching for pupils in school. One factor here is that academies and free schools may not follow the curriculum. However, the curriculum will still be of relevance and importance even to these academies and free schools as a reference point for informing their objectives and programmes of study. Therefore it is all the more important to ensure that the new national curriculum provides rigour and continuity to ensure that all schools that consult it are able to base their teaching on the highest possible standards of practise.

Question 2: Do you agree that instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims based on the content in the programmes of study?

Although online safety aspects can and should be taught across the curriculum wherever relevant (eg PSHE and Citizenship) they have always been closely aligned with the ICT curriculum as it presents one of the greatest opportunities to deliver the educational messages in this area. Our experience is that, for schools and teachers to fulfil their important role in empowering and supporting young people in safe and responsible online use, they need to be provided with more guidance.

In the ICT Curriculum to date, in addition to the learning objectives, there is additional guidance provided to schools and teachers which helps for uniform understanding of the objectives. In the new Computing curriculum this guidance is absent and we have concerns that this may lead to different interpretations of the learning objectives and could therefore harm the aim for uniform coverage. We welcome the opportunity for teachers to be flexible and creative in the methods used to deliver this content and feel they would be more able to do so if provided with more guidance under each learning objective in the new Computing curriculum.

Question 3: Do you have any comments on the content set out in the draft programmes of study?

From our survey we know that children and young people feel they have a right to be educated about online safety.

80% of 7 – 19s said that they had been taught about staying safe in the past year, and we would be concerned that this figure would drop with the introduction of the proposed new curriculum. However, while this may seem a high figure the survey results clearly showed that there is still more work to be done and revealed that there is an opportunity for educators to reach out to early and primary and upper secondary age groups, with lower levels of provision of education for lower primary and upper secondary age groups. This shows that even though safety is currently covered in the curriculum it is not taught evenly and so we must retain it with explicit mention in the new curriculum to ensure that children and young people continue to be supported with this education that they not only need but that they are actively seeking.

Primary age focus

We are pleased to see that e-safety messages are being delivered early and at Key Stage 1 pupils should be taught to "communicate safely and respectfully online, keeping personal information private, and recognise common uses of information technology beyond school." We support these suggested areas but encourage the inclusion of a message around who children can turn to for help if they get into difficulty online. 'Tell someone' is our core message when engaging with Key Stage 1 and below and therefore we feel it should form one of the learning objectives for this age group.

The values of safety, respect and security are important notions and we support their inclusion in the primary curriculum. There are provisions laid out at Key Stage 2 that encompass e-safety, but we would also encourage the 'keeping personal information private' learning objective to be included in the Key Stage 2 learning objectives so that this message can be reinforced across the Key Stages.

In our survey, we found that children of primary age want to learn how to stay safe online, and while it is encouraging to see that 79% of 7-11s said they had been taught about staying safe online in the last year, there are still many young people who say they have not been taught, and this is particularly apparent in younger age groups, with a quarter (25%) of 8 year olds and over a third (35%) of 7 year olds who say they have not been taught about staying safe online. Given that 7 year olds are enthusiastic internet users, with 56% using social networks and 36% creating games, it is important that messages about staying safe online reach them too.

Secondary age focus:

The importance of a robust and progressive e-safety curriculum has been outlined by OFSTED in their September 2012 revision of the 'School Inspection Handbook' and 'Inspecting E-safety' briefing sheet yet there is no planned provision in the new Computing curriculum for the teaching of e-safety at Key Stage 3.We are concerned that by omitting messages for this age group, there is a real risk that schools will assume that e-safety content was covered sufficiently in Key Stages 1 and 2, and it therefore does not require the same focus and attention as other content that is explicitly detailed in the Computing curriculum.

This risk is particularly marked by the fact that this is the age for children that is characterised by risk-taking and testing the boundaries. It is also the age group at which young people more actively begin to engage in various forms of online communication. As a result internet safety issues for this age include risks that are less relevant to primary age pupils, such as sexting and other online risk taking activities. We believe that the secondary curriculum should reflect this shift, to continue to equip secondary aged children to be able to use the internet safely and responsibly as their use and

the relevant risks they are exposed to changes. It is also important to note that some primary schools are challenged to deal with some of the risks faced by secondary school children – for example, we know that many social networking services have a minimum age of 13, though many under 13s use these services. Indeed our 'Have your Say' survey found 30% of 7-11s had a Facebook account. Some primary schools find it challenging to address the safety issues in the use of these services when their pupils are not supposed to be using them. This makes it all the more important for secondary schools to address this.

We feel strongly that the inclusion of e-safety messages at Key Stage 3 is vital for ensuring that pupils are taught relevant e-safety skills, that there is consistency between schools in the teaching of these skills, and that schools are able to meet the requirements to be outstanding at inspection in regards to e-safety.

The topics explicitly listed in the previous ICT curriculum were a good start on directing schools to educate pupils on e-safety and we strongly recommend that those messages are carried over to the Computing curriculum. Of those we spoke to in the 'Have Your Say' survey, many secondary aged young people, even if they are being taught about online safety, noted that these lessons aren't always covering what they would like. In one of the focus groups a boy explained that the content of their e-safety lessons wasn't useful and relevant, he felt that it "is always about the extremes, not realistic to our experiences. Yes it can happen but not always relevant to us."

We feel the content at Key Stage 3 therefore needs to be expanded to also include learning objectives on internet safety, privacy and security online, relationships and communication, digital literacy (encompassing messages around ethics, reputation, identity and self-image), and information literacy (covering types of online content that may be harmful, and the impact and consequences, as well as legal aspects, of online behaviour, such as malicious communication, sexting, plagiarism and breach of copyright via illegal downloading). Underpinning all of these areas is a strong need for pupils to be educated on how to report and who to report to when online content or behaviour causes offence or concern.

Question 7: Do you agree that we should change the subject information and communication technology to computing, to reflect the content of the new programme of study for this subject.

We can see that there are reasons both for and against changing the name of the subject information and communication technology to computing. It should be recognised that the term "computing" may connote a narrower subject area and that this may give rise to challenges in ensuring the broader and more crucial aspect of e-safety is covered by teachers in this subject.

Question 9: What impact – either positive or negative – will our proposals have on the 'protected characteristic' group?

There is currently debate on whether a vulnerable individual offline is always a vulnerable individual online and vice versa, but we feel that regardless of this distinction, there is potential for all children to be vulnerable online in some capacity. Therefore the inclusion of key e-safety messages at each Key Stage is paramount in ensuring that all children are given opportunity to become safe and responsible digital citizens. We know from our work in schools that pushing the boundaries and risk

taking are behaviours common to teens, and it is vital that they receive continued support and education on e-safety topics.

Question 12: Who is best placed to support schools and/or develop resources that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum?

There has been a reduction in capacity and reach of LEA advisory teams, yet it remains imperative that schools are fully informed of resources and tools available that can empower them to deliver and sustain e-safety messages in their school community. This would be best served by a national agency funded by Government who can develop resources and clearly signpost to resources and tools from other agencies. A good example of a suitable agency is the UK Safer Internet Centre and their bank of resources www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/teachers-and-professionals/advice.

Childnet (who form part of the UK Safer Internet Centre) have been creating resources for teachers and professionals on relevant e-safety issues for a number of years and we feel that we can also play a positive and important role in supporting schools to adopt a rigorous and progressive e-safety curriculum. www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals

Question 14: Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the proposals in this consultation?

We have found the results of our 'Have Your Say' survey underline the importance of comprehensive and balanced programmes of education on staying safe online, which needs to reach children of all ages. Teachers and school staff also need to be equipped with the knowledge and up-to-date resources to communicate these important lessons effectively and have the confidence to do so.

The Scottish Government's Child Internet Safety Action Plan (2010) and the integration of key e-safety messages into the 'Curriculum for Excellence' is a good example of ensuring teachers and school staff are well informed and equipped to deliver those important messages to pupils and the wider school community.

The new Computing curriculum should provide an opportunity for all children, including those in Key Stage 3 and beyond to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of online safety. We know from our survey that in Key Stage 3 and 4 those children will always turn to their peers first for help and advice although there is still a role for teachers to play. By providing a rigorous and well rounded e-safety curriculum at Key Stage 3 we could ensure that secondary age pupils know how to keep themselves and their peers safe online.

It is of utmost importance that the national curriculum includes all the key messages related to e-safety and in sufficient detail to ensure that schools and teachers consulting the document are able to provide a rigorous and consistent education in this area.