



# Library Note

## Impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children's and Young People's Online and Digital Interactions

On 20 November 2014, the House of Lords is scheduled to debate the following motion:

“that this House takes note of the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on children's and young people's online and digital interactions”

Information presented in this Note has been compiled to provide background reading for Members ahead of the debate.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was brought into force in the UK in 1992. The Convention sets out a number of rights regarding children and their wellbeing, and forms the basis for much of the work of UNICEF. In light of the growth of the internet and digital technologies over the past couple of decades, UNICEF has recently published a number of reports discussing how these mediums could impact upon children's rights or safety. This was also considered by the UK Government in its review of its performance in relation to the Convention. Ofcom has reported that, in 2013, 37 percent of those aged 5 to 7 used the internet every day, compared to 62 percent of 8 to 11 year olds and 81 percent of 12 to 15 year olds.

Three of the key risks that have been identified by the UK Government, and by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, in relation to children's online activity are: sexual exploitation; cyberbullying and social network misuse; and access to inappropriate content. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre estimated that there were around 50,000 individuals involved in the downloading or sharing of indecent images of children during 2012; Childline reported that they had received 4,500 reports of a child being bullied online in 2012/13; and Authority for Television On Demand estimated that 473,000 6 to 17 year-olds accessed an adult website in December 2013.

This Note considers these subjects in turn, including measures currently in place to protect children's online safety and recommendations for further action. The Note also highlights a number of statistics regarding children's online activity and experiences, and provides some links to further reading.

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## 1. Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed by the United Kingdom on 19 April 1990.<sup>1</sup> It was then ratified by the UK on 16 December 1991, before coming into force on 15 January 1992. The Convention sets out a number of rights regarding children and their wellbeing. These are briefly summarised in part two of this Library Note, with extra emphasis on those rights that may be linked to children’s use of online and digital technology. Part two of this Note also discusses some of the work done by UNICEF to consider children’s online safety in light of the Convention, and the UK Government’s latest implementation review. Statistics regarding the way children are using the internet can be found in part three of this Note.

Three of the prevailing themes running through the work on children’s online safety, including that by the UK Government and by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, are the threats of: sexual exploitation of children (including the ‘grooming’ of children and sexual abuse imagery), children’s access to inappropriate content, and the misuse of social networking sites (eg ‘cyber bullying’). As such, this Note discusses these subjects separately in parts four to six. However, it is worth noting that many of these threats (and the responses to them) overlap.

Finally, part seven of this Note contains links to further reading, and also sets out general information on some of the other UK programmes currently in place regarding children’s online safety (including the UK Council for Child Internet Safety).

## 2. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

### 2.1 What the Convention Says

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was agreed to by the majority of UN Member States in 1989. The United Kingdom signed the Convention in 1990, with it coming into force in UK law in 1992. The Convention forms the basis for international children’s rights and for the work of UNICEF:

These rights describe what a child needs to survive, grow, participate and fulfil their potential. They apply equally to every child, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

The CRC is the basis of all of UNICEF’s work. It is the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history.<sup>2</sup>

The Convention is made up of 54 articles, with the overriding intentions of providing children with “special safeguards and care”, and the rights to “live an individual life in society” and to grow up in a family environment.<sup>3</sup> Article 1 of the Convention defines children as those under the age of 18 (unless other laws applicable to the child create an earlier majority). The Convention provides for matters such as the non-discrimination of children (article 2), the need to act in their best interests (article 3), the right to life (article 6) and for numerous measures directly affecting their welfare (eg article 38 sets out limits on involvement in armed conflicts).

<sup>1</sup> GOV.UK, ‘[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)’, August 2014.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) website, accessed 3 November 2011.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), 2011, p 3.

Although open to interpretation, the articles seemingly most relevant to the specific focus of this Library Note can be summarised as follows:

- Article 4—States shall undertake all appropriate legislative and administrative measures to ensure compliance with the rights under the Convention. This includes children’s social and cultural rights.
- Article 13—Children shall have the right to freedom of expression, including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice”.
- Article 16—Children shall not be subject to unlawful or arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence.
- Article 17—States shall recognise the importance of mass media, and shall ensure access to material from a diverse range of national and international sources. However, State Parties shall also “encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18” (article 17 (e)).
- Article 18—States shall recognise and support the principle that parents have common responsibilities for bringing up their child. Appropriate assistance should be provided for parents.
- Article 19—States shall take all appropriate legislative, social, educational and administrative measures to protect children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.
- Article 31—States shall recognise the right of the child to rest and play, including involvement in recreational and cultural activities.
- Article 34—States shall take all appropriate measures to protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including involvement in sexual practices and in pornographic materials.
- Article 35—States shall take all appropriate measures to protect children from abduction or trafficking.
- Article 36—States shall protect children from all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child’s welfare.

## 2.2 Online Safety and the Convention

In their 2011 report on online safety, UNICEF stated that “the powerful impact of the internet on the lives of children throughout the world will continue to grow and evolve. While internet access and child usage are highest in industrialised countries, the global pace of web access and broadband penetration, and the exponential uptake of mobile phone technologies, coupled with

increasing capacities and decreasing costs, means that the rest of the world is beginning to catch up. In the next few years, it is anticipated that the most dramatic changes will occur in low and middle income countries”.<sup>4</sup> The organisation went on to express concerns over the knowledge gaps that already exist regarding online safety in the industrialised world, and suggested that the lack of knowledge regarding the risks of the internet in Africa, Asia and the Middle East could be even more significant.

UNICEF stated that the limited research that does exist on internet usage in low and middle income countries showed that “children from virtually all countries use social networking sites in largely similar ways”, and identified a number of reasons these children may be at a greater risk from potential groomers and inappropriate content.<sup>5</sup> For example, the organisation suggested that parental knowledge in these countries may be lower, and that more children may be forced to use the internet away from home (eg in internet cafés). However, UNICEF reasoned that this may change over time as younger people (who grew up with internet access) become parents themselves. Highlighting the fast development of the sector, and the uncertainty over the effects this would have, the organisation concluded that the continuing growth of the internet and digital technology:

Has the potential to enrich individuals and society alike, helping to remove barriers between people, paving the way for interaction, education and development, but also presenting opportunities for wrongdoing. Children are at the forefront of this dilemma. While children and young people are intrinsic to building a safer internet, the onus is on governments and the private sector to ensure that protection is integrated into promoting expansion of access and the positive benefits the internet brings.<sup>6</sup>

A further report, published for UNICEF by the London School of Economics and Political Science, considered how best UNICEF should react to the changes in the digital world and where the organisation should concentrate its research.<sup>7</sup> The report recommended that UNICEF should “now prioritise attention, investment and action regarding the role of information and communications technology (ICT) as a cross-cutting theme in all its work, reflecting the fact that ICT is rapidly reshaping children’s opportunities and risks worldwide”.<sup>8</sup> For example, the report suggested that UNICEF develop a global agenda on children’s digital rights, and also that the organisation invest considerable resources in expertise and on localised surveys of children’s experiences with ICT.

UNICEF has since published guidelines for ICT providers addressing the online protection of children.<sup>9</sup> These identified five key areas in which to promote or protect children’s rights:<sup>10</sup>

- Integrating child rights considerations into all appropriate corporate policies and management processes.
- Developing standard processes to handle child sexual abuse material.

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<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, [Child Safety Online: Global Challenges and Strategies](#), December 2011, p 21.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science, [A Global Agenda for Children’s Rights in the Digital Age: Recommendations for Developing UNICEF’s Research Strategy](#), September 2013.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p 5.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF, [Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection](#), 2014.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp 8–13.

- Creating a safer and age-appropriate online environment.
- Educating children, parents and teachers about children’s safety and their responsible use of ICTs.
- Promoting digital technology as a mode for increasing civic engagement.

The report then contains general guidelines for industry and some sector specific checklists (covering mobile operators, internet service providers, etc).

## 2.3 The UK and the Convention

The United Kingdom reports to the United Nations on its progress implementing and upholding the rights contained in the Convention every five years.<sup>11</sup> The UK’s latest review was published in May 2014,<sup>12</sup> and summarised “how successful the UK has been at implementing the UNCRC since 2008”.<sup>13</sup> The report also highlighted some “new challenges” faced by the United Kingdom since the previous review, including the economic crisis, globalisation and developments within information technology and social media.<sup>14</sup> This was seen to create particular challenges regarding internet safety, cyber bullying, the increased sexualisation of children, the impact of the recession on disadvantaged families, and child trafficking.<sup>15</sup>

Turning specifically to social media and the internet, the report stated that they provide children opportunities to further develop friends and interests, but also expose them to additional risks such as cyber bullying, grooming and potentially harmful content. The report then set out the United Kingdom’s stance in relation to internet safety:

The UK has developed a robust child internet safety protection programme through the [UK Council for Child Internet Safety \(UKCCIS\)](#).<sup>16</sup> The [Family Online Safety Institute](#) finds the UK to be a leader in internet safety best practice, and [EU Kids Online](#) reports that the UK is one of five countries with high internet use amongst children yet relatively low levels of risk.

A key achievement is that the four major internet service providers [BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media]<sup>17</sup> will have prompted all new broadband customers in the UK to switch on parental internet controls by the end of 2014, thereby restricting access to harmful content. From September 2014, the national curriculum computing programmes of study in England will encourage children from 5 to 16 to learn about safe and appropriate internet use. A £25 million campaign to raise awareness of risks associated with the internet will also begin in 2014, and [Safer Internet Day](#) is widely promoted every February.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> GOV.UK, [‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’](#), accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>12</sup> HM Government, [The Fifth Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), May 2014.

<sup>13</sup> GOV.UK, [‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’](#), accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>14</sup> HM Government, [The Fifth Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), May 2014, p 6.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See part seven of this Library Note.

<sup>17</sup> Ofcom, [Press release on internet safety measures](#), 22 July 2014.

<sup>18</sup> HM Government, [The Fifth Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), May 2014, p 53.

### 3. Statistics on Young People's Internet Usage in the UK

#### 3.1 Office for National Statistics

In its most recent report on internet access in the United Kingdom, the Office for National Statistics estimated that, in 2014, 38 million people in the UK (76 percent of the population) accessed the internet every day.<sup>19</sup> According to the ONS, 22 million households had home internet access, and 58 percent of people regularly accessed the internet through their mobile phones (this figure was 24 percent in 2010).<sup>20</sup> The report also provided breakdowns of internet usage by age group, and contained the following findings for 16 to 24 year-olds:

- 79 percent used computers daily.<sup>21</sup>
- 87 percent had accessed the internet through a mobile phone, 59 percent through a laptop or tablet, and 22 percent through another handheld device (eg MP3 players, game consoles, etc) within the last three months.<sup>22</sup>
- The most common activity on the internet for the age group was “social networking” (eg Facebook or Twitter), with 91 percent using it for that purpose within the last three months. Other popular activities included: sending/receiving emails (80 percent); finding information about goods and services (71 percent); reading online news (65 percent); and playing or downloading multimedia, eg games, music, videos (68 percent).<sup>23</sup>
- 83 percent had purchased something over the internet in the last 12 months (clothing was the most popular purchase, followed by films/music and tickets for events).<sup>24</sup>
- 34 percent of 16 to 24 year olds had used the internet to obtain information on public authorities or services within the past 12 months, and 29 percent had used the internet to download or submit official forms. However, 52 percent had not used it for such purposes.<sup>25</sup>
- 71 percent had shared files over email, and 65 percent had shared files over social networking sites. The most popular reasons for saving or sharing files over the internet were: ease of access, protection against loss, and ease of sharing with others.<sup>26</sup>

#### 3.2 Ofcom

Published by Ofcom, the *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report*, provides detailed information on young people's use of and access to different media sources.<sup>27</sup> This included personal computers, laptops, tablets, games consoles, television, radio and other devices. The

<sup>19</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Internet Access: Household and Individuals 2014](#), 7 August 2014.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p 1.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Table 1.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Table 9.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Table 10.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Tables 12 and 13.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Table 17.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, Appendix: Tables 20 and 22.

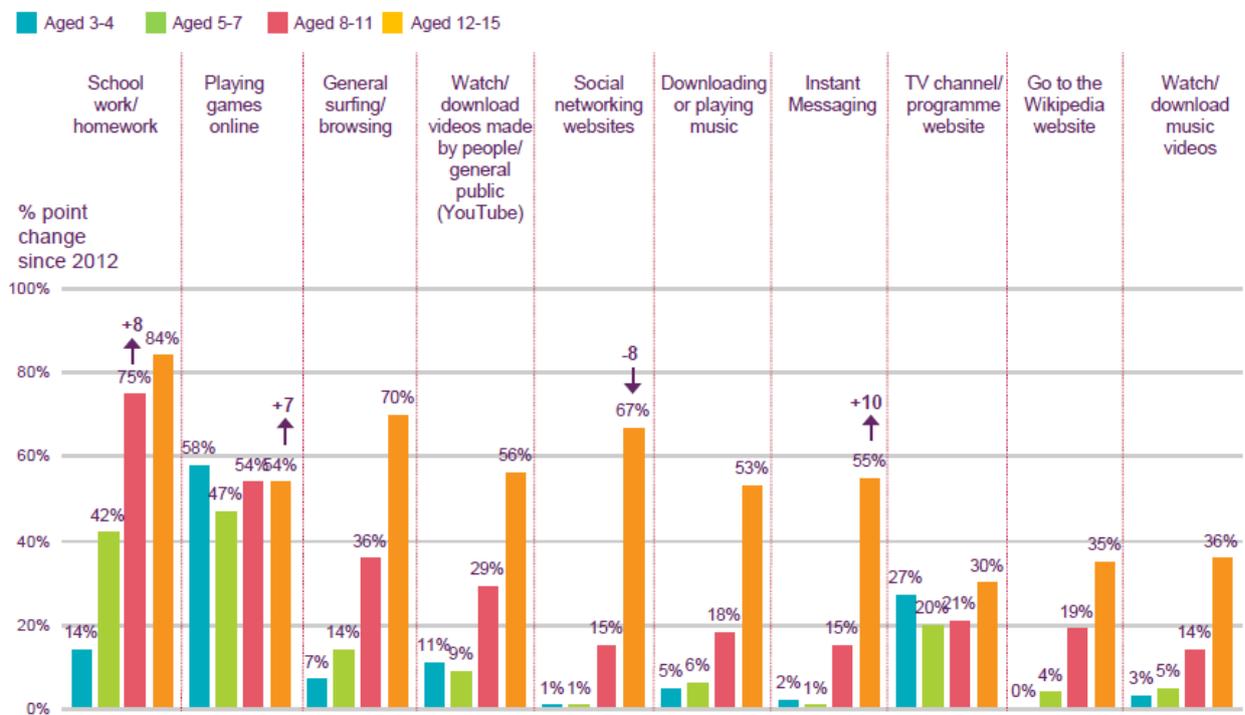
<sup>27</sup> Ofcom, [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), October 2013.

report contained statistics on a range of different age groups across the under-16s. Some of the key findings of the report follow.

### Internet Use by Young People

Ofcom found that the frequency of internet access increased with age, with 37 percent of those aged 5 to 7 using the internet every day in 2013, compared to 62 percent of 8 to 11 year olds and 81 percent of 12 to 15 year olds.<sup>28</sup> A similar increase was evident in the amount of time spent on the internet per week, with 5 to 7 year olds estimated as spending 6.7 hours online, 8 to 11 year olds spending 9.2 hours online and 12 to 15 year olds spending 17 hours online.<sup>29</sup> This trend also applied to those children with internet access in their bedrooms, with 4 percent of 5 to 7 year olds having internet access in their room, 15 percent of 8 to 11 year olds and 38 percent of 12 to 15 year olds.<sup>30</sup> The following graph shows the amount of time spent by different age groups engaging in different online activities:

Top Ten Internet Activities Carried Out at Least Once a Week, by Age: 2013



Source: Ofcom, [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), October 2013, p 77

The graph shows that the most regular online activity for the 8 to 11 and 12 to 15 age groups was homework. The graph also demonstrates the popularity of playing games online, and of social networking sites for those aged 12 to 15. However, regarding social networking, Ofcom reported a drop in its use from the previous year:

Compared to last year, 12 to 15s are now less likely to say they have set up a social networking site profile (68 percent vs 81 percent). There has also been a decrease since

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p 40.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, p 55.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p 51.

2012 in the proportion of children aged between 8 to 12 (under-age users) with an active profile on Facebook/Bebo or MySpace (22 percent; down from 30 percent in 2012).

[...] 12 to 15s are now less likely to go online weekly to visit social networking sites (67 percent vs 75 percent) and more likely to go online for instant messaging (55 percent vs 45 percent). But the majority of 12 to 15s (85 percent) access their main social networking site profile every day and one in five (20 percent) do so more than ten times a day. This figure increases to 27 percent among those 8 to 15s who access their profile mainly on any type of mobile phone.<sup>31</sup>

The report also noted an increase in children's ownership and use of internet-enabled devices such as tablet computers and smartphones. Indeed, the report stated that the choice of device often reflected the needs of the different age groups, with younger users preferring tablets (due to ease of use and access to games or other multimedia content), and older users preferring smartphones (due to the focus on networking).<sup>32</sup>

### **Parental Concerns and Regulation of Children's Online and Digital Activities**

Ofcom stated that "in 2013, parents of 5 to 15s are most likely to be concerned about television (21 percent) and mobile content (19 percent), followed by online (16 percent) and gaming content (13 percent), with relatively few being concerned about radio content (4 percent)".<sup>33</sup> Concerns regarding the internet included the potential for cyber bullying (with 24 percent of parents fearing their child may suffer it, and 14 percent fearing their child may participate in cyber bullying), their child giving their personal details to inappropriate people (22 percent) and their child downloading a virus (23 percent).<sup>34</sup> Ofcom found that: "one in five or less are concerned about who their child is in contact with online (19 percent); online content (16 percent); or online sharing/accessing of copyrighted material (12 percent)".<sup>35</sup>

Ofcom estimated that 39 percent of 12 to 15 year olds spent most of their time online with an adult in the room.<sup>36</sup> This figure was 85 percent for 5 to 7 year olds, and 69 percent for 8 to 11 year olds. The report also stated that:

Although 83 percent of parents trust their child to use the internet safely, the majority of parents (85 percent) also provide some kind of mediation to help keep their child safe online. Parents of 5 to 15s use a combination of approaches to mediate their child's internet use, including: having regularly talked (at least monthly) to their children about staying safe online (45 percent), having rules relating to parental supervision (53 percent) or using some kind of technical mediation (62 percent) which includes 43 percent having installed parental controls.<sup>37</sup>

However, the report noted that some parents feared that their child may know more about the internet than them, and that only 43 percent of parents had parental controls installed on home

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p 7.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, p 4.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, p 9.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, 114.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p 47.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, p 9.

devices.<sup>38</sup> There was also a lack of knowledge from parents about the minimum age requirement on the social networking site Facebook.

### Children’s Online Confidence and Experience

Ofcom found that “83 percent of 8 to 11 year olds and 91 percent of 12 to 15s say that they are confident about how to stay safe online, and 67 percent of 12 to 15s say they are confident that they can judge whether websites are truthful”.<sup>39</sup> The report found a decrease in the percentage of children in these age groups reporting that they had seen upsetting content, and that less than 10 percent of children in all age groups would not tell someone about any online experiences they found distressing. However, the report also found that:

On average, 12 to 15s have never met, in person, three in ten (on average, 78) of the friends listed on their main social networking site profile. A substantial minority of 12 to 15s have a social networking profile which may be visible to people not known to them, and this has increased since 2012 (33 percent vs 22 percent). Children with a social networking site profile that may be visible to people not known to them are more likely to have undertaken some kind of potentially risky online behaviour, such as adding people to their contacts they don’t know in person, or sending photos or personal details to people only known online.

[...] Almost one in ten 12 to 15s (8 percent) and 4 percent of 8 to 11s say they have experienced online bullying in the past year. Close to half of all 12 to 15s know someone with experience of negative online/mobile phone activity such as online bullying, gossip being spread or embarrassing photos being shared. One in five say they have personal experience of negative online/mobile phone activity.<sup>40</sup>

The experience of online or digital bullying was more prevalent among girls. Girls were more likely than boys to say they felt under pressure to appear popular or attractive online and to have experienced gossip being spread about them online or through texts.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.3 EU Kids Online

EU Kids Online is a research network, based out of the London School of Economics and Political Science and led by Sonia Livingstone, which “seeks to enhance knowledge of European children’s online opportunities, risks and safety”.<sup>42</sup> EU Kids Online publishes a wide range of reports and studies on the subject of young people’s online safety, all of which are available on its [website](#). One of these, published in December 2010, presented findings on the online experiences of children in the United Kingdom.<sup>43</sup> In addition to reporting on how much children used the internet, and how they accessed it, the report also included information on some of the possible risks encountered and taken by children. For example, the report found that:

- Many children communicated with people that they had not met face-to-face: “19 percent of 11 to 16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than younger

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*, pp 9–10.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p 8.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, pp 8–9.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p 9.

<sup>42</sup> [EU Kids Online website](#), accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>43</sup> LSE, London: EU Kids Online, [Risks and Safety for Children on the Internet: the UK Report](#), December 2010.

children) say they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks. Four in ten (39 percent) 9 to 16 year old internet users have looked for new friends on the internet, 32 percent have added contacts they don't know face-to-face, and 11 percent have sent an image of themselves to someone they have not met face-to-face".<sup>44</sup>

- 11 percent of UK children said that they had seen online sexual images in the preceding year.<sup>45</sup>
- 8 percent of children said that they had been bullied online (compared to 21 percent overall): "most common is nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child (7 percent), followed by messages being posted or passed on (5 percent) and other nasty things online (4 percent). Only 2 percent have been threatened online".<sup>46</sup>
- 7 percent of 11 to 16 year olds had received sexual messages, and 5 percent had seen a sexual message posted online. In addition, "3 percent have seen others perform sexual acts in a message and 2 percent had been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online".<sup>47</sup>
- 4 percent of UK children have gone on to have an offline meeting with someone they met online (this is most common in 13 to 16 year olds).<sup>48</sup>
- 19 percent of UK 11 to 16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content: "most common are hate messages (13 percent), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites and sites talking about drug experiences (both 8 percent)".<sup>49</sup> 2 percent had visited a suicide site.<sup>50</sup>

EU Kids Online has also published a European-wide report on children's perceptions of internet safety,<sup>51</sup> and a report focusing on internet usage of those aged 0 to 8.<sup>52</sup>

## 4. Sexual Exploitation of Young People Online

### 4.1 Main Legislation

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 contains a number of provisions in relation to sexual offences against children. Offences covered by the Act include: sexual activity with children; meeting a child following "sexual grooming"; abusing a position of trust; and abuse of a child through prostitution or pornography.

The Protection of Children Act 1978 makes it a criminal offence to take, permit to be taken, distribute, show, advertise or possess for distribution indecent photographs or pseudo-

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p 4.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p 5.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>51</sup> LSE, London: EU Kids Online, [Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children](#), 2011.

<sup>52</sup> LSE, London: EU Kids Online, [Zero to Eight. Young Children and their Internet Use](#), 2013.

photographs of persons under the age of 18. Possession of such photographs is an offence under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

## 4.2 Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

The [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre](#) (CEOP) is the principal body in the United Kingdom tasked with investigating and preventing the sexual exploitation of children. The organisation:

Works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account. We protect children from harm online and offline, directly through [National Crime Agency] led operations and in partnership with local and international agencies.

We pursue those who sexually exploit and abuse children, prevent people becoming involved in child sexual exploitation, protect children from becoming victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and prepare interventions to reduce the impact of child sexual exploitation and abuse through safeguarding and child protection work.<sup>53</sup>

The organisation summarises its performance under the headings: Prevent, Protect and Pursue. Regarding this performance, CEOP stated that, in 2012–13:

- Over 2.6 million children had seen the thinkuknow resources.
- Over 800 professionals in education, child protection and law enforcement had been trained by CEOP this year with a range of subject areas relating to preventing and detecting sexual crimes against children.
- 790 children were subject to safeguarding or protection as a result of CEOP activity.
- CEOP received 18,887 reports relating to child sexual exploitation.
- CEOP disseminated 2,866 intelligence reports to UK and overseas law enforcement agencies relating to individuals suspected of being involved in child sexual abuse.
- CEOP activity led to the arrest of 192 suspects in the last year.<sup>54</sup>

In its 2013 report, *Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, CEOP estimated that there were around 50,000 individuals involved in the downloading or sharing of indecent images of children during 2012.<sup>55</sup> They stated that many of these images were shared through file hosting and social networking, peer to peer file sharing and the “hidden internet”.<sup>56</sup> The organisation expressed concerns over the potential growth of the “hidden internet” and of the

<sup>53</sup> Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, ‘[About CEOP](#)’, accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, ‘[Statistics and Facts](#)’, accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, *Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, June 2013, p 8.

<sup>56</sup> Parts of the internet not listed by standard search engines.

live streaming of sexual abuse. The report also contained statistics concerning the victims and types of indecent imagery found within a sample of 118 CEOP reports.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the scale of sexual exploitation, CEOP stated that:

Recent research conducted by the NSPCC indicates that around 5 percent of UK children suffer contact sexual abuse at some point during childhood. It is likely that around 190,000 of these will fall victim to contact sexual abuse by a stranger or an adult relative (other than a parent or guardian) before turning 18. This represents an average of more than 10,000 new victims in the UK every year. In addition, CEOP receives reports from around 1,000 children each year concerning online victimisation by adults. A further unquantifiable number of children overseas suffer contact sexual abuse at the hands of UK nationals visiting or living and working abroad.<sup>58</sup>

In 2012, the organisation received 1,145 reports of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE).<sup>59</sup> It stated that 69 percent of these were failed attempts at OCSE. Describing these as examples of “victim vigilance”, CEOP believed that this demonstrated increased awareness among young people of the risks of OCSE. However, they reasoned that “such contact is highly indicative of the early stages of OCSE and illustrates the ‘scatter gun’ approach to victim selection used by many offenders. It is therefore not possible to establish how many others have fallen victim to these apparently unsuccessful approaches”.<sup>60</sup> CEOP estimated that:<sup>61</sup>

- Around 6.8 percent of cases resulted in an offline meeting.
- At least 19 percent involved the use of a webcam (the organisation reasoned that the actual number was probably substantially higher).
- The most common offending environments were: “social networking (SN) at 48.5 percent, with instant messaging and chat accounting for another 31 percent. OCSE on gaming sites and mobile phones featured in a total of 10 percent of reports”.<sup>62</sup>

The organisation also expressed concerns over the increased use and ownership of smartphones among young people, and over the decreased period of “grooming” that often precedes a further offence: “today the period of time between initial engagement with a child and an offending outcome is often extremely short”.<sup>63</sup>

### 4.3 Internet Watch Foundation

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) was established by the UK internet industry in 1996, and allows the public and IT professionals to report criminal content in a confidential way.<sup>64</sup> This includes child sexual abuse images (both photographic and non-photographic) and criminally obscene adult content. The organisation works in partnership with law enforcement bodies, the

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid*, pp 8–9.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*, p 6.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, p 10.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, p 10.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p 11.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, p 10.

<sup>64</sup> Internet Watch Foundation, ‘[About Us](#)’, accessed 4 November 2014.

industry, government and international partners to minimise and eliminate this content. Working with these partners, they aim to:

- Disrupt the availability of child sexual abuse content hosted anywhere in the world.
- Protect children who are victims of sexual abuse from repeat victimisation and public identification.
- Prevent internet users from accidentally stumbling across child sexual abuse content.
- Delete criminally obscene adult, and non-photographic child sexual abuse content hosted in the UK.<sup>65</sup>

To achieve this, the organisation has introduced the UK Internet Hotline for people to report criminal content. It also works to ensure that any content is taken down as soon as possible (both in the UK and globally) and communicates with its international partners to disseminate information on potential sources of content.

In 2013, the organisation received 47,809 reports of child sexual abuse content, of which 13,330 were confirmed as such by its specialists.<sup>66</sup> The organisation found 13,182 webpages containing child sexual abuse imagery, across 1,660 domains worldwide. The number of domains hosting child sexual content was down from the 3,077 in 2006, but has risen slightly since 2009 (when there were 1,316). Commenting on their findings, the IWF stated that:

During 2013 we also saw an increase in child sexual abuse images hosted on websites, file hosting sites, which are often referred to as cyberlockers and social networking sites.

An image hosting service allows users to upload images to their server which are then available via a unique URL. This URL can then be used to make inline links or embedded in other websites, forums and social networking sites. Many hosts are free, and some don't require registration. Some have optional paid image hosting functions while others offer only paid services.

The nature of the site alone should not be used as a reliable indicator of availability of the image or video. For example, one image on a high traffic service (such as a social media site) could be seen by thousands of users. Therefore, no provider of web services can be complacent.<sup>67</sup>

The organisation stated that, in 2013, it had taken action against 13,182 instances of child sexual abuse images hosted on websites. 47 percent of UK-based webpages were removed in 60 minutes or less, and 59 percent in 120 minutes or less. The body found that companies that are members of the IWF removed content quicker. The organisation also talked about the work it was doing to quicken global removal rates by chasing up reports of criminal content. It claimed that, after ten days, "86 percent of child sexual abuse URLs are removed within

<sup>65</sup> Internet Watch Foundation, '[Remit, Vision and Mission](#)', accessed 4 November 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Internet Watch Foundation, '[Operational Trends](#)', accessed 4 November 2014.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

Europe; 68 percent are removed within North America and 44 percent are removed from other locations around the world”.<sup>68</sup>

#### 4.4 Scrutiny and Recommendations

In its March 2014 report on online safety, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee examined the UK’s current safeguards in regards to child abuse imagery online.<sup>69</sup> The report was generally positive about much of the work being done, particularly by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre and by the Internet Watch Foundation.<sup>70</sup> However, the Committee did query whether such bodies were being resourced effectively, and whether the national and international legislative structure could be improved. It also suggested that the Government should monitor the role played by search engines and internet service providers, and should introduce further legislation to regulate their activities if deemed necessary.

In its response, the Government defended the framework in the UK, stating that it believed legislation to be “robust and clear”, and highlighting the UK’s current engagement with EU conventions.<sup>71</sup> It stated that it would continue to work closely with the IWF, and claimed that the CEOP benefitted from additional specialist resources due to the body now operating under the National Crime Agency.<sup>72</sup> The Government also highlighted changes made by Google and Microsoft to their global search functions:

At the Prime Minister’s summit with internet industry representatives on 18 November 2013 Microsoft and Google announced that they had introduced a number of changes to their search function, not only in the UK, but across the world and National Crime Agency testing of the new measures shows that child abuse images, videos or pathways are no longer being returned against a blacklist of search terms at present.

The changes introduced by the search engines include:

- The introduction of new algorithms that will block child abuse images, videos and pathways that lead to illegal content, covering 100,000 unique searches on Google worldwide.
- Stopping auto-complete features from offering people child abuse search terms.
- Google and Microsoft will now work with the National Crime Agency and the Internet Watch Foundation to bring forward a plan to tackle peer to peer networks featuring child abuse images.
- Google will bring forward new technology that will put a unique identification mark on illegal child abuse videos, which will mean all copies are removed from the web once a single copy is identified.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety](#), 19 March 2014, HC 729 of session 2013–14.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, pp 44–7.

<sup>71</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety: Responses to the Committee’s Sixth Report of Session 2013–14](#), 3 July 2014, HC 517 of session 2014–15, p 2.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, pp 3–4.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, pp 4–5.

Further information on the November summit, including a [list of the measures agreed](#), can be found on the GOV.UK website.

## 5. Cyber Bullying and the Risks of Social Networking

### 5.1 Current Situation

The NSPCC defines cyber bullying as bullying that occurs online, mostly through social networks and mobile phones.<sup>74</sup> It describes the activity as increasingly common, and states that “a child can feel like there’s no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night”.<sup>75</sup> It lists a number of forms that cyber bullying can take, including: abusive text messages; setting up abusive polls and hate sites about particular children; explicit mobile phone messaging (sometimes called ‘sexting’); sharing embarrassing photos; and ‘trolling’ (eg sending menacing or upsetting messages over social networks or online gaming). The organisation reported that 4,500 children had contacted ChildLine regarding online bullying in 2012/2013.<sup>76</sup> In addition, in evidence given to the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, the NSPCC stated that 28 percent of young people with a social networking profile had experienced something upsetting in the last year, with 37 percent of this group having been subject to ‘trolling’.<sup>77</sup> Further evidence to the Committee, given by BeatBullying, revealed that almost one in three children had experienced cyber bullying, and one in five of 12 to 16 year olds believe online bullying to be part of life.<sup>78</sup>

As noted earlier in this Library Note, Ofcom reported that “almost one in ten 12 to 15s (8 percent) and 4 percent of 8 to 11s say they have experienced online bullying in the past year”, and that close to half of all 12 to 15s know someone who has experienced cyber bullying of some kind.<sup>79</sup> However, the anti-bullying charity, [Ditch the Label](#), reported in October 2013 that “69 percent of young people have been victims of cyber bullying, a figure much higher than previously reported. New research also shows that young males and females are equally at risk of cyberbullying, and that young people are twice as likely to be bullied on Facebook than on any other social network”.<sup>80</sup>

Bullying online is covered by much of the same legislation as bullying offline. In response to a written question on 21 July 2014, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Lord Nash, listed the current legislation that can be used to prosecute cyber bullying offences as: the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the Malicious Communications Act 1998, the Communications Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2013.<sup>81</sup> Lord Nash stated that the Government is providing £4 million of funding (over two years) to four anti-bullying organisations, and stressed the importance of the role of education:

Educating children and young people about online safety is key to tackling cyber-bullying. From September 2014, e-safety will be taught at all four key stages of the curriculum, covering primary-age children for the first time. This will empower young people to

<sup>74</sup> NSPCC, ‘[What is Bullying and Cyber Bullying](#)’, accessed 4 November 2014.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> ChildLine, [ChildLine Review of 2012/13](#), 2013, p 40.

<sup>77</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety](#), 19 March 2014, HC 729 of session 2013–14, pp 34–5.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Ofcom, [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), October 2013, p 9.

<sup>80</sup> Ditch the Label, ‘[Cyber Bullying Statistics: The Annual Cyber Bullying Survey 2013](#)’, 10 October 2013.

<sup>81</sup> HL *Hansard*, 21 July 2014, cols [164–5VA](#).

tackle cyber-bullying through responsible, respectful and secure use of technology, as well as ensuring that pupils understand age-appropriate ways of reporting any concerns they may have about what they see or encounter online.<sup>82</sup>

Lord Nash also referred to the wider powers available to teachers under the Education Act 2011. According to the published guidance available to teachers on bullying prevention, this gives the power to “search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones”.<sup>83</sup>

## 5.2 Scrutiny and Recommendations

In its online safety report, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee called on the Government to consolidate and clarify the legislation prohibiting cyber bullying.<sup>84</sup> The Committee also believed that more needed to be done by social networking sites (including Facebook and Twitter) to combat the problem. It stated that “both Facebook and Twitter have sensible terms and conditions attaching to the use of their services. However, these should be made much clearer, explicit and visible. People who might be tempted to misuse social media need to be left in no doubt that abuses online are just as unacceptable as similar misbehaviour face-to-face”.<sup>85</sup> The Committee also called for the option to report abuse to be more prominently available, and suggested that the way in which complaints are handled should be monitored by Ofcom.<sup>86</sup>

The Government rejected the Committee’s calls to make changes to the legislation, reasoning that these laws were already well understood by practitioners and the police.<sup>87</sup> Regarding the actions of social media companies, the Government indicated that it agreed with the Committee’s concerns and would continue to talk to the industry about the issues and what more could be done to protect people online.<sup>88</sup> Also responding to the Committee, Ofcom stated that it currently has no statutory powers in relation to social media, and that any change in its duties would be a matter for Government and Parliament.<sup>89</sup> However, it did state that it had contributed to [ParentPort’s guidance](#) on the issue.<sup>90</sup> Guidance on safe social media usage has also been published by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, the NSPCC has published a report on younger children’s use of social networking.<sup>92</sup> The organisation found that, although many of the social networking sites required users to be over 13 (including Facebook and Twitter), there was still reliable evidence that children 13 and under were using these sites. As under-13s are not intended to be using the site, the providers do not provide information and advice specific to these younger users. The NSPCC called on

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Department for Education, [Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies](#), October 2014.

<sup>84</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety](#), 19 March 2014, HC 729 of session 2013–14, p 36.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p 37.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p 40.

<sup>87</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety: Responses to the Committee’s Sixth Report of Session 2013–14](#), 3 July 2014, HC 517 of session 2014–15, p 11.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p 12.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, pp 18–19.

<sup>90</sup> ParentPort, ‘[Social Networking](#)’, accessed 4 November 2014.

<sup>91</sup> UK Council for Child Internet Safety, [Good Practice Guidance for the Providers of Social Networking and Other User-interactive Services](#), 2010.

<sup>92</sup> NSPCC, [Younger Children and Social Networking Sites: A Blind Spot](#), 2013.

such providers to “acknowledge their responsibility to these children and their parents, and improve the way they respond to the safety of younger users, for example by working harder to keep them off their sites, setting the privacy settings to the highest level possible, and by providing a range of ways for reporting illegal or offensive content which have been tested with children to ensure they are child-friendly”.<sup>93</sup> NSPCC recommended the sites run regular safety audits, provide tutorials on online safety for new users, and displayed pop-ups reminding users of good practice. The NSPCC also called on Ofcom and UKCCIS to play a greater role in prioritising the safety of younger children.<sup>94</sup>

## 6. Access to Inappropriate Content

### 6.1 Current Situation

In its 2010 report, EU Kids Online stated that 11 percent of UK children had seen sexual images online, and 19 percent of 11 to 16 year olds had seen potentially harmful user-generated content—this included drug references, hate messages, sites about eating disorders and suicide sites.<sup>95</sup> In addition, Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD) has published research suggesting that:

- 44,000 children aged 6 to 11 visited an adult website (using a PC or laptop) during December 2013.
- This figure increased to 200,000 for children aged 6 to 15 and to 473,000 for those aged 6 to 17.
- One in twenty UK visitors to adult websites were underage in December 2013.<sup>96</sup>

However, as noted in the report, these figures only include access through laptops and personal computers; the results are “therefore likely to underestimate significantly the number of underage visits”.<sup>97</sup> As evidence of this, ATVOD quoted a number of statistics, published by Ofcom, regarding the ownership and use of tablets or smartphones by these age groups.

The NSPCC has stated that children access online pornography “easily”.<sup>98</sup> The organisation has also stated that there is evidence that access to online pornography is harming children, as noted by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee.<sup>99</sup> This included specific mentions of sexually explicit images by children in counselling sessions, and details about the negative impact the content had had on them.

In a speech made at the NSPCC on 22 July 2013, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, made a number of announcements regarding the protection of children from inappropriate content.<sup>100</sup> Although he praised the valuable role played by the internet, and the importance of it remaining “open”, he expressed concerns over “how online pornography is corroding childhood and how,

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p 9.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid*, pp 25–6.

<sup>95</sup> LSE, London: EU Kids Online, [Risks and Safety for Children on the Internet: the UK Report](#), December 2010, pp 4–5.

<sup>96</sup> Authority for Television On Demand, [For Adults Only?: Underage Access to Online Porn](#), March 2014, p 4.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>98</sup> BBC News, ‘[Online Pornography: Children Access Material Easily, Says NSPCC](#)’, 28 March 2014.

<sup>99</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety](#), 19 March 2014, HC 729 of session 2013–14, p 20.

<sup>100</sup> GOV.UK, Speech on ‘[The Internet and Pornography: Prime Minister Calls for Action](#)’, 22 July 2013.

in the darkest corners of the internet, there are things going on that are a direct danger to our children and that must be stamped out”. His announcements included the following agreements with internet and mobile phone providers:

- UK mobile phone operators will automatically apply adult content filters to all phones on their network, unless the user proves they are 18 or over.
- The six main public wi-fi providers (covering more than 90 percent of coverage) will apply family filters to all computers connected to their networks in locations that are likely to have children present.
- The four main home wi-fi providers will automatically apply family friendly filters to new customers, and will contact existing customers by the end of 2014 with the “unavoidable decision” as to whether they wish to apply content filters. Both of these measures would require the account holder to specify they did not want the filters applied.<sup>101</sup>

## 6.2 Scrutiny and Recommendations

In its report into children’s access to online pornography, ATVOD welcomed the increased focus on content filters, but reasoned that this needed to be combined with other measures to combat the problem effectively:

While we are fully aware of, and support, the recent and ongoing initiatives to achieve more uptake, technical solutions can only ever be part of the solution. Ofcom research shows that only 43 percent of parents of 5 to 15 year olds have parental controls installed on the PC, laptop, or notebook their child uses at home, while research for the European Commission Safer Internet Programme tested the efficacy of leading software and found underblocking rates of between nine percent and 47 percent in relation to adult content. Public policy cannot rely on parental control as a ‘magic bullet’ solution, but should regard it as part of a package of measures designed to reduce the availability of online pornography to children.<sup>102</sup>

As such, ATVOD called for more to be done to encourage the providers of online pornography to act responsibly by introducing age verification and access control. ATVOD recognised that such policy measures would need to be adapted depending on where in the world the provider was based. The body then set out specifics as to how this may be achieved.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast, other organisations, such as the [Open Rights Group](#), have expressed concerns that content filters block too much material. For example, the group highlighted a Newsnight report claiming that filters were blocking websites “offering sex education and advice on sexual health and porn addiction”.<sup>104</sup> In December 2013, the organisation stated that they were working with the UK Council for Child Internet Safety on the issue of over-blocking and also published ten recommendations for internet service providers to help avoid the problem.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Authority for Television On Demand, [For Adults Only?: Underage Access to Online Porn](#), March 2014, p 21.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, pp 21–3.

<sup>104</sup> BBC News, [‘Porn Filters Block Sex Education Websites’](#), 18 December 2013.

<sup>105</sup> Open Rights Group, [‘Ten Recommendations to ISPs for Dealing with Over-blocking’](#), 19 December 2013.

Many of these issues were discussed by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee in its online safety report.<sup>106</sup> For example, the Committee called on the Government to work with other countries to crack down on the providers of online pornography that is readily available to children, and urged providers to take more steps (such as age verification measures) to ensure children could not access such content.<sup>107</sup> The Committee backed the introduction of automatic content filters in the home, and agreed that filters should be closely monitored to ensure they are effective (both in terms of under-blocking and over-blocking). It also recommended increased involvement by Ofcom in the process.

In its response, the Government stated that it will:

Legislate shortly to ensure that video-on-demand material that would be rated R18 by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is put behind access controls and to ban the provision of material that would not receive any classification by the BBFC. This will ensure that we have the same level of protection for hard-copy and on demand material based in the UK which is rated R18. We will work with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to strengthen the enforcement of these laws.<sup>108</sup>

The Government also stated that it was already working with EU member states to restrict children's access to inappropriate content. Regarding content filters, the Government agreed that filters should be closely monitored and accepted the important role that Ofcom could play in the process.<sup>109</sup> The Government also agreed that providers of adult content had a key role to play in protecting children, and stated that age verification models were currently being discussed by the UKCCIS.<sup>110</sup>

On 10 June 2014, Baroness Howe of Idlicote's private member's bill, the [Online Safety Bill \[HL\] 2014–15](#), received its first reading in the House of Lords. The preamble of the Bill states that it intends to:

Make provision about the promotion of online safety; to require internet service providers and mobile phone operators to provide an internet service that excludes adult content; to require electronic device manufacturers to provide a means of filtering internet content; to make provision for parents to be educated about online safety and for the regulation of harmful material through on-demand programme services.<sup>111</sup>

The Bill has yet to receive a date for second reading. However, a similar Bill, also introduced by Baroness Howe, did receive its second reading in the last session.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety](#), 19 March 2014, HC 729 of session 2013–14.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*, p 23–33.

<sup>108</sup> House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Online Safety: Responses to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2013–14](#), 3 July 2014, HC 517 of session 2014–15, p 6.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*, pp 8–9.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*, p 7.

<sup>111</sup> [Online Safety Bill \[HL\] 2014–15](#), p 1.

<sup>112</sup> HL *Hansard*, 6 December 2013, cols [497–537](#).

## 7. Further information and Resources

### 7.1 UK Council for Child Internet Safety

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) was set up in 2008<sup>113</sup> to work with the Government to improve internet safety and to implement many of the recommendations of the Byron Review.<sup>114</sup> Published in March 2008, the Byron Review was an independent review commissioned by the Government on the risks children might face from the internet and video games.

UKCCIS states that it is now made up of “200 organisations drawn from across government, industry, law, academia and charity sectors that work in partnership to help keep children safe online”.<sup>115</sup> The board includes members from industry bodies such as Microsoft, Facebook and BT, academics such as Sonia Livingstone (from the London School of Economics and Political Science and director of EU Kids Online), and representatives of charities (eg the NSPCC). The organisation meets on a quarterly basis, and is chaired jointly by Edward Timpson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Mike Penning, Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, and Ed Vaizey, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy.

UKCCIS has published guidance for providers on a number of issues, including:

- Social Networking;<sup>116</sup>
- Search Engines;<sup>117</sup>
- Parental Controls.<sup>118</sup>

UKCCIS has also published general guidance on child internet safety advice.<sup>119</sup> This includes advice for children on using different mediums, and advice for parents or carers on monitoring a child’s internet safety. It covers areas such as online gaming, chatrooms, downloading, paying for things on the internet, and social networking. For example, regarding social networking, the publication sets out advice for children on privacy settings and ‘befriending’ or meeting people that they do not know offline.<sup>120</sup> For parents, the advice in this area includes: keeping an open dialogue with the child over their activities, using parental controls and encouraging children to be honest about their age.

<sup>113</sup> HC *Hansard*, 13 October 2008, [col 532](#).

<sup>114</sup> The Byron Review, [Safer Children in a Digital World](#), March 2008.

<sup>115</sup> GOV.UK, ‘[UK Council for Child Internet Safety](#)’, accessed 5 November 2014.

<sup>116</sup> UK Council for Child Internet Safety, [Good Practice Guidance for the Providers of Social Networking and Other User-interactive Services](#), 2010.

<sup>117</sup> UK Council for Child Internet Safety, [Good Practice Guidance for the Providers of Search](#), 2010.

<sup>118</sup> UK Council for Child Internet Safety, [Code of Practice on Parental Controls](#), October 2011.

<sup>119</sup> UK Council for Child Internet Safety, [Advice on Child Internet Safety 1.0](#), 2012.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid*, pp 18–19.

## 7.2 Internet Matters Campaign

[Internet Matters](#) is a campaign run by the four main internet service providers in the United Kingdom. Commenting on the launch in early 2014, Ed Vaizey, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, stated:

The Government takes the issue of child safety online extremely seriously and is delighted to see the ISPs fulfil their commitment to the Prime Minister and come together to help parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and how to talk to them about using the internet safely.

The Internet Matters campaign is the latest in a series of measures to help parents in this area, including action on family friendly filters that allow parents to prevent their children from accessing potentially harmful content, more filters on public wifi in areas where children are likely to be and the introduction of online safety to the new national curriculum.<sup>121</sup>

The campaign features a [website](#) aimed at providing parents and children with a range of information on internet safety.

## 7.3 Further Reading

The following is a list of additional reports and research material on the subject of children's online safety published over the last few years:

- EU Kids Online, [Final Recommendations for Policy](#), September 2014.
- European Commission, [European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children](#), 2 May 2012.
- Department for Education, [The Government's Response to the Consultation on Parental Internet Controls](#), December 2012.
- Byron Review, [Safer Children in a Digital World](#), March 2008.

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<sup>121</sup> GOV.UK, '[Internet Safety Campaign Launches](#)', 13 May 2014.