



Online Safety Bill (re-committed Clauses and Schedules): call for evidence

Parent Zone submission, December 2022

About Parent Zone

Parent Zone sits at the heart of modern family life, providing advice, knowledge and support to shape the best possible future for children as they embrace the online world. We were founded in 2005 and since then have gone on to collaborate with many organisations who share our vision. The online world offers enormous opportunities to children, young people and families. But we also know it can pose huge challenges.

Our mission at Parent Zone is to improve outcomes in a connected world, so that children will be:

- safer online
- resilient to the challenges of the online world
- educated for a digital future

Summary of submission

This call for evidence was requested by the [Online Safety Bill \(re-committed Clauses and Schedules\) Committee](#) and was designed to address matters contained within the re-committed Clauses and Schedules of the Bill. Our response can also be found published as written evidence on the Bill [website](#).

- Parent Zone supports clause 69 of the Bill, outlining that pornographic service providers have “A duty to ensure that children are not normally able to encounter content that is regulated provider pornographic content in relation to the service (for example, by using age verification).”, however would like the Government to commit to bringing this in within 6 months of the Bill’s passing.
- Parent Zone would also like to offer our support to the proposed clauses 29 and 30, tabled by the SNP and would welcome measures to empower Ofcom to publish a strategy at least every three years setting out the measures it is taking to promote media literacy among the public.

Children's access to pornography

Parent Zone wishes to demonstrate our support for clause 69 of the Bill, outlining that pornographic service providers have “A duty to ensure that children are not normally able to encounter content that is regulated provider pornographic content in relation to the service (for example, by using age verification).” We are however dismayed by the time it has taken to prevent this harm to children and would like the Government to commit to bringing this in within six months of the Bill's passing, which could easily be done by allowing Ofcom to research and consult on age assurance tools between now and then.

We are concerned about the access that children across the UK have to pornography, and the harmful effects that viewing this content has on children. [Research](#) shows that 51 percent of 11-13 year olds have seen pornography (many of them unintentionally), with 41% of 16-17 year olds having viewed it in the past two weeks.

There is regulation offline to prevent children from accessing pornography, and Parent Zone believes that similar regulation should be in place in the online space rapidly to protect all children from the damaging impact of this adult content.

Media Literacy

Parent Zone would also like to offer our support to the proposed clauses 29 and 30, tabled by the SNP and would welcome measures to empower Ofcom to publish a strategy at least every three years setting out the measures it is taking to promote media literacy among the public. We were extremely concerned when Media Literacy was removed from the Bill and believe it is essential that it is put back. We also think that it has become even more important with the removal of the 'legal but harmful' provision.

Whilst we welcome the recent Media Literacy Strategy from the DCMS and will be delivering a programme of work in 8 local authorities as part of that strategy, Parent Zone views the removal of media literacy from the Bill as a missed opportunity. We see it as essential to have it in the legislation in order to ensure that Media Literacy remains a



priority in the long term just as it is in countries like Finland where it is regarded as a matter of national security.

Parent Zone doesn't just want children to be safe online, we want families to flourish. We should be aspiring to be a world leader in Media Literacy, not least to protect our democracy and grow our economy.