

## Child Safety Online: Age Verification for Pornography – NSPCC Young People’s Response

The NSPCC regularly consults with young people about our services and policies. We held a session with a group of fifteen 15-17 year olds from around the country, many of whom have accessed our services, and discussed with them the issue of online pornography and their views on introducing age verification checks. This response is the outcome of that session, combining the opinions and comments of these young people, offering their insight into an issue that is experienced by and impacts them.

**Question 1: In your opinion, should age verification controls be placed on all forms of legal pornography (‘sex works’) online that would receive a British Board of Film Classification rating of 18 or R18?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don’t know

We agree with introducing age verification for all online pornography. We don’t want to accidentally see it or have it pop up; it’s intense, violent, not real life, and could be damaging. By blocking it, it sends a message that it’s a serious issue, but some young people will find a way around it if they really want to, so this is only part of the solution.

**Question 2: Do you think age verification controls should be placed on sites containing still as well as moving images of pornography?**

- a. Moving images only
- b. Still and moving images
- c. Neither still nor moving images
- d. Other (please specify)
- e. Don’t know

Age verification needs to also apply to social media sites and online chat rooms, like Omegle.

**Question 3: To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a new law to require age verification for online pornographic content available in the UK?**

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

We are interested to hear your thoughts on how age verification controls on pornographic websites should work. For instance, these could include the kinds of Content Access Control (CAC) Systems which Ofcom requires for video on demand sites that provide specially restricted material and are situated in the (a to c below).

Checks should be done on people each time they visit a site, to make sure that a child cannot use their parents' computer to view pornography.

Sites should have no logos or pictures until you have verified your age, so only people who are going on there consciously will sign up and you won't be able to see anything accidentally. Just like you can't advertise cigarettes, or have colourful packaging, porn sites shouldn't be allowed to advertise and try to attract customers.

**Question 4: If age verification controls are to be required on pornographic websites, how do you think they should work (select all that apply, and please suggest other ideas that you may have)?**

- a. Confirmation of credit card ownership or other form of payment where mandatory proof that the holder is 18 or over is required prior to issue.
- b. A reputable personal digital identity management service that uses checks on an independent and reliable database, such as the electoral roll.
- c. Other comparable proof of account ownership that effectively verifies age. For example, possession and ownership of an effectively age-verified mobile phone.
- d. Other (please give details)

- Checks should be for porn and porn pop-ups.
- NI number
- They must make sure there is no way the porn sites can get hold of personal information.

**Question 5: Do you agree that a regulator should have the power to direct payment and other ancillary services to remove their services from noncompliant websites? Please give reasons.**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

We think this is a good idea because the website will not want to lose money so will be more willing to comply.

These services have to be responsible, especially if there is a chance of children seeing the sites they are selling their services to / advertising on.

**Question 6: Do you have any suggestions for other actions that could be taken to ensure that commercial providers of online pornography comply with the new law? Please give details.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**Question 7: Do you think that the regulator should have the power to direct parent and umbrella companies of pornographic websites to comply?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

**Question 8: Do you agree with the introduction of a civil regime to regulate pornography websites? Please explain your answer.**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

This will work sometimes but might not always be strong enough.

**Question 9: Would the introduction of a new criminal offence be a better form of regulation?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

**Question 10: To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a new regulatory framework?**

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Not discussed

**Question 11: Should a new framework give powers to a regulator/ regulators to (select all that apply):**

- a. monitor compliance with the new law by pornographic websites
- b. notify non-compliant sites (and the companies that run them) that they are in breach of the new law
- c. direct non-compliant sites (and the companies that run them) to comply with new law
- d. notify payment providers and ancillary services of non-compliant sites on which their services are available, that the site is in breach of the new law and has not implemented age verification (despite direction from the regulator)
- e. direct payment providers and ancillary services to withdraw services from non-compliant sites
- f. issue fines to non-compliant sites
- g. set standards for age verification controls, and determine content which is in scope
- h. other (please specify)

**Question 12: Do you think that a co-regulatory approach involving more than one regulator would be appropriate in this context?**

- a. If yes,
  - which regulator(s) should have a role?
  - which (if any) other stakeholders should have a role (e.g. industry)?
  - what should their respective roles be (please refer to the list of potential roles at question 11)?
- b. If no,

do you think that a single regulator would be more appropriate? If so, please specify which regulator, if you have a view.  
c. Don't know

Not discussed

**Question 13: Do you agree that the regulator's approach should focus on having the greatest proportional impact, for instance by looking at the most popular sites, or those most visited by children in the UK?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

Just because a website doesn't have many viewers, it doesn't mean there won't be children looking at it, so the focus should be on as many sites as possible, not just the most popular.

Social media is where a lot of pornography is seen and shared, so this needs to be included if you want to have the biggest impact.

**Question 14: Wherever new regulation is proposed, the Government must consider impacts on smaller and micro-sized businesses (those with fewer than 50 employees) based in the UK, and whether these impacts are proportionate.**

**Should smaller and micro-sized businesses (such as some payments and ancillary services) be exempt from the scope of the policy?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

Not discussed

**Question 15: Overall, are you broadly in favour of the proposals set out in the consultation?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

**Question 16: How effective do you think the Government's preferred approach would be in preventing children from accessing online pornography?**

- a. Extremely effective
- b. Very effective
- c. Moderately effective
- d. Slightly effective
- e. Not effective at all
- f. Don't know

Age verification only addresses half the problem – those seeing it accidentally. If it stops pop ups from happening and means there aren't adverts for porn sites, only those who want to see it will. But young people who really want to view pornography will find a way. A lot of young people are searching for information about sex or want

to find out about things and pornography sites are where they go. We still need information about sex.

*'The Government need to introduce better / more sex education lessons and resources for young people to help prevent young people trying to view porn. People will always be able to get around it, if they want to view it they will. Prevent porn popping / showing up on people's screens when they are not searching for it.'*

*'Personally I believe that social media is the biggest problem, not just websites. So much inappropriate content is unregulated on social media that anyone can see.'*

*'Some sites have pop ups because the parent's phones and computers are being used by their children.'*

*'Blocking is not the solution in full. Loads of websites (not just dedicated porn sites) contain pornography, like social media, and pop ups which also need to be stopped.'*