

Full responses to Mobile Broadband Group's consultation for the review of the UK mobile content code

1. The BBC



BBC RESPONSE TO MOBILE BROADBAND GROUP'S REVIEW OF THE "UK CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE SELF REGULATION OF NEW FORMS OF CONTENT ON MOBILES"

Introduction

This submission outlines the BBC's current policy for labelling and regulating its content in on-demand environments, including mobile. It has been designed to work as an industry standard and has been adopted by other UK broadcasters including ITV, Channel 4 and FIVE and supported by Ofcom. It is put forward for the MBG to consider alongside its current framework with the suggestion that the G for Guidance system (or one similar to it) will be considered as a serious option for use in the future.

The first section of this response answers Consultation Questions 1, 2 and 8. The second section responds to Question 5. The BBC will not respond to Consultation Questions 4, 6 and 7.

Section 1: Response answers Consultation Questions 1, 2 and 8

Question 1: Do you agree that the way mobile operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access areas is the right approach? If not, what else do you feel could be done?

Question 2: Do you believe that there is significant demand for a more granular age categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and unrestricted? If so, what age categories do you think would be appropriate? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Question 8: Do stakeholders have any comments about mobile operators' approach to giving customers information and advice or any suggestions as to what further measures might be practical and helpful?

The Need for Content Labelling

There is a widespread understanding in the UK of, and support for, the 9pm Watershed for linear TV broadcasting. But as audiences increasingly time-shift their viewing through on demand technologies such as BBC iPlayer, Video on Demand or Sky+, new and additional approaches become necessary. This includes the manifestation of these services not just in the PC world, but also on mobile devices. Content labelling is designed to offer a safe viewing environment for children and one in which all users of any age can make informed choices about what content they choose to consume, before they do so.

The consultation questions ask about the demand for a more granular level of content categorisation and about what level of granularity that should exist. The BBC's view, however, is that it is not the demand for and level of *categorisation* but level of *detail* that is most important to audiences.

Audience Research

In summary, independent research commissioned by the BBC has indicated strong support for a formal system of text labelling for challenging on-demand content. The most pressing demand for labelling has been amongst parents of young children.

Our research examined audience comprehension of several formats of content labelling used in the European and American markets, ranging from an age-rating system (similar to that used by the British Board of Film Classification for cinema and video content) through symbols and short-hand initials to long-form text information.

Initially, respondents accepted age-ratings as the most obvious solution. However, after viewing programme examples, respondents recorded the most reservations about them. Age-ratings were seen as too general an assumption: what one 15 year old was emotionally old enough to watch was not the same as another. Age ratings were also unhelpful about the type of content: no indication was given about the actual content which might offend e.g. sex, violence, strong language. Parents were keen to know about the type of content in a programme for different reasons. They might have different views of the suitability of different types of content e.g. strong language, violence or sexual content.

The conclusion the BBC reached was that age-rating was suitable for cinema release and film – entertainment that people choose to go and see – but not for the much broader range of programming available immediately in the living room of any member of the household. We imagine it is likely that this would also extend to media on hand-held devices.

Research also indicated that long-form text labelling was the format that most met audience needs. Respondents agreed that this was the only comprehensive way of reflecting the specific types of strong content available on television. This conclusion was echoed in Ofcom's research, where 46% of respondents favoured long-form text labels compared to just 13% favouring age-ratings.

Although text labels were the most popular, many respondents identified a need for a short-hand symbol or letter to appear next to the programme title to indicate that content information was available. Further research concluded that a 'G' for 'Guidance' letter was the most suitable short-hand.

The BBC aspires to use the 'G' for 'Guidance' content labelling system throughout its audience facing services as they appear on different digital technology platforms. In addition, the BBC believes there will be greater benefit if other organisations adopt the same scheme where appropriate. We will continue the deployment across the BBC portfolio and promote its use on other services because we believe it will deliver exponential benefit as audiences become increasingly familiar with the system.

How the content labelling system works

The 'G' for Guidance labelling system displays a 'G' symbol when a piece of content contains challenging material. The nature of the content is spelt out in text alongside the programme synopsis when it is to be downloaded or in the Player window when the content is to be streamed. For example, a text label might say "contains strong language" or "contains adult humour". The presence of the 'G' symbol is also used to trigger parental controls when enabled.

Users can enable the password protection system from their phone during the setup process. If they choose not to, they can enable it at any stage. Every iPlayer page has a prominent, visible reminder that Parental Controls are either ON or OFF with an open or closed padlock icon beside it.

At the point of viewing, the user has to enter their password, if password protection is enabled, before they can view the content. Anyone entering an incorrect password receives an explanatory message that they don't have permission to access 'G' rated content.

The BBC is to commission further research into iPlayer use by parents as part of our programme of continuous development.

Use on Third Party Platforms

The BBC sees the 'G' for Guidance content labelling system is an integral part of our audio-visual on-demand content offer. However, it has been acknowledged that on some third-party platforms this may be initially constrained, subject to the technical and operational issues of such platform operators or device manufacturers. Our approach is to set reasonable timescales within which content labelling should be implemented as part of the offer. PIN protection or other such parental guidance controls are the responsibility of third parties. However we seek to have such mechanisms aligned with content labelling wherever this proves an appropriate fit.

This has proven true with our distribution of the BBC iPlayer on mobile devices like Nokia's N96 and the mobile BBC iPlayer portal. Where there is integration of these products with network operator portals, we require that the labelling always "travel" with and be displayed with the programming.

Best Practice

We work closely with other providers to promote best practice for content labelling and we are active participants in the Broadband Stakeholder Group Content Information Group and we are also an associate member of the UK self regulatory body for On Demand services, the Association of Television On Demand (ATVOD).

Difficulties with Age Ratings

The current code which this consultation asks for comment on is based on labelling based on an age rating. As stated above, the BBC (and others) have found this is problematic for a variety of reasons to consumers for on-demand content (as opposed to content they choose to go see). Raising the level of granularity may, in some ways, help give consumers better information about the suitability of a particular piece of content, but we feel a that more descriptive form labelling, as described above, is more appropriate.

Age rating systems are, by their nature, very binary and force – particularly in a digital world – binary decisions. Parents can choose to allow or disallow content above the rating “18+” or not. These types of polar decisions do not allow for a suitable amount of consideration to be given to each piece of content that is available to users. For example, a piece of explicit sexual education content might, in a parents view, be suitable for their child while a piece of sexually explicit drama is not. With a ‘black-and-white’ rating system (even if it were more granular than the current code), audiences are still forced into blanket decisions, rather than being encouraged to make discriminating choices based on the merits of each programme.

From a more practical perspective, as a responsible content provider, the BBC (as well as many other broadcasters) has already adopted a suitable code of content labelling for their content. It would be problematic on a number of levels if we were forced to re-classify content in the mobile space. Re-classifying content to be part of an age-rating systems could also be time consuming and costly and the BBC would be concerned that the “G” could be misconstrued as being equivalent to a specific age rating, in which case all users under that age could potentially be restricted.

We support the (fixed-line) Broadband Stakeholder Group approach which set of principals for best practice in this area (<http://www.broadbanduk.org/content/view/114/>) while recognising that there’s room for a variety of means for ensuring the consumer is adequately protected.

Pre-regulated Content

The BBC’s content (as well as the content of many other providers) is already heavily regulated at both a European and national level. In effect what this means, is that there are already regulatory controls (which are stricter in the UK than many other countries) in place to ensure that the BBC and other similar publishers would be prevented – at the point of production – from creating any of the type of content that would be deemed to be the most dangerous or offensive. Not all content in the mobile

space falls into this area; however, the BBC would encourage the MBG to consider this and consider whether or not content that has already been regulated and classified might be treated differently than “made for mobile” content which may not have been subject to any other regulatory framework or oversight.

Section 2: Response answers Consultation Question 5

Question 5: Do stakeholders have any comments about the handling of illegal content by the mobile operators?

While it is clear to the BBC that the code is not designed to restrict its reporting of news events, it would like to bring to the attention of the MBG that, in rare instances, our News and Current Affairs materials from time to time contains material that depicts real life or re-enacted crimes – violent or otherwise. We would resist any code that attempted to limit our ability to provide this material to audiences or required any form of take-down for this type of content and therefore request that the MBG ensure that whatever code it adopts ensures the BBC’s freedom in this area is maintained.

NB: Much of the content of this response was previously submitted to the European Commission’s consultation on Cross Media Rating & Classification [dated]. We have reused the response material in the spirit of promoting G for Guidance across the industry.

Jason DaPonte, Managing Editor, BBC Mobile
November 2008

2. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

Mobile Broadband Group – Code of Practice Consultation

CEOP response

There are a number of generic issues that are common to both mobile technology and the internet that need to be addressed in accordance with good practice as part of a considered response to this consultation.

Essentially the points that should be reviewed against what the Mobile Broadband Group is proposing are:

- The convergence of technology;
- Age verification, and the reliance on parental regulation;
- The definition of what is ‘inappropriate’;
- The reporting of illegal and/or inappropriate content and contact;
- The moderation of content;
- Reliance and use of stronger filtering controls; and
- The need for education and public awareness raising approaches that synergise with existing ThinkUknow guidance.

However, from an operational and strategic analysis perspective, there are two very specific areas of concern; access to the internet via mobile phones, and the use of this technology as a grooming tool by offenders.

- i. Intelligence gleaned by CEOP shows that emerging technological developments in the mobile phone industry mean that phone usage is increasingly part of the phenomenon of cheap and convenient ‘utility computing’.
- ii. Although access to the internet through mobiles is a comparatively new development, and the costs are still prohibitive to many young people, the popularity of services which provide large data storage capacity is unquestionable. Essentially, these services provide the opportunity for users to access, copy and share data image and video files from non-fixed locations.

- iii. This is obviously of particular interest to CEOP in relation to offenders seeking to share child abuse images and other material and information relating to child sexual exploitation, This technology also offers the opportunity for anyone to access chat or social networking sites remotely, and in terms of children and young people, this further prohibits any degree of parental or adult supervision or control and escalates risk factors.

- iv. The use of mobile devices to connect to the internet should be considered in line with the extensive experience and operational evidence that CEOP has around how offenders may access and circulate self generated material.

- v. Similarly, camera phones and mobile connectivity make it easier for children to become vulnerable through 'self generated risk' e.g. through the posting of images and offline locations.

- vi. CEOP intelligence and strategic crime analysis shows that mobile phones are regularly used as part of a combination of communication tools used by child abusers. Essentially, a key trend in the grooming process is the escalation of contact from the online environment to talking and texting on mobile devices.

- vii. As mobile and laptop wireless broadband connectivity increases in popularity, the online environment will change in such a way that allows greater flexibility for offenders and increased online availability of children and young people. In this respect, it is of note that broadband experts predict that the mobile phone network may become the default method by which people connect to the internet within a timeframe of as little as two years, and recent research released by YouGov indicates that one in ten people already regularly access the internet using a mobile phone connection.

- viii. In conclusion, whilst the most recent data taken from the CEOP 2007-08 Strategic Overview (Restricted Version)¹ show a paucity in the number of reports of abuse received from the public mentioning mobile phones, there is strong evidence that this will become a significant area of concern for CEOP as technologies develop and converge, as children gain greater access to affordable mobile devices, and as offenders continue to exploit technology to generate and share material and to make contact with potential victims.

3. Childnet International



Childnet International response to Mobile Broadband Group Consultation on the “UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles”

Childnet International is a UK-based charity¹ working with others around the world to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. A child focused organisation, Childnet works directly with children, those responsible for children and other organisations and service providers operating around them. In particular, Childnet works actively in the area of education and awareness in promoting the potential and opportunities that the Internet and new technologies offer by providing quality advice to children, young people, parents, teachers and caregivers, to enable children to use the technology safely and responsibly. Childnet’s award-winning educational resources have been used and distributed throughout the UK (for example, over 1 million copies of Childnet’s Know IT All for Parents CDROM was distributed in less than 6 months in 2007-8), and adapted for use and distribution in other countries. Childnet is also active in carrying out research² in this area as well as working in key policy fora, such as the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)³ and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) cyberbullying taskforce for example.

Childnet is pleased to respond to the Mobile Broadband Group’s (MBG) consultation on the mobile code.

1. Do you agree that the way mobile operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access is the right approach? If not what else do you feel could be done?

Childnet believes that the system in current operation is the right approach to mobile content. It remains vitally important that mobile operators help protect their younger customers, i.e. children, from inappropriate content. This is important both for the same reasons that we try and protect children from this content in other media, but also because of the personal and private nature of the mobile device, both of which make parental supervision increasingly difficult, the spontaneity of the device which allows for impulsive behaviour at any time and the level of responsibility children feel about their phones.

Given the level, or rather lack of public awareness about the content controls available, Childnet judge that it is necessary that these controls are set by default as being ‘on’ at the time of purchase for customers, regardless of whether they are pay-as-you-go or post pay. In conjunction with this, Childnet are concerned about the finding in the Ofcom review⁴ that one MO did not provide this access controls as being on by default for post-pay customers, and we would value more information on why this is the case in this instance, and what additional measures are taken in this case to ensure the safety of younger users.

As well as seeing great benefits with much better communication to parents and carers about the child protection measures that the mobile phone operators have provided, Childnet would also like to a better way of gauging or monitoring the effectiveness of the current system than

¹ See www.childnet.com for more information. Charity Registration no: 1080173

² For example see Childnet’s report with the National Consumer Council (now Consumer Focus): ‘Fair game? Assessing commercial activity on children’s favourite websites and online environments’, <http://www.childnet.com/publications/policy.aspx>

³ Childnet was an original member of the Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet at its inception in 2001.

⁴ ‘UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles’ Review, Ofcom, 11th August 2008, http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/mediitpub/ukcode/

is used currently, and sees real value for close attention given to monitoring this area, particularly as mobile internet access becomes more accessible to children and young people. The reasoning provided in the document to show the effectiveness of the current system is not robust, and there is a real risk that it may not provide an accurate picture of the current situation.

The document states that:

“The IMCB is not reporting any significant levels of public concern about minors getting access to 18 content on mobile devices, nor are the mobile operators, the IWF or Ofcom” (p 5)

However, Childnet does not draw any confidence from this finding. Significantly, the Ofcom Media Literacy Audit 2008⁵ found that only 15% of adults with a child in their household were aware of age verification systems, and following on from this it is not unreasonable to deduce that, the user reports (as public concern) regarding classification of certain mobile content may not be an accurate portrayal of the situation. There are further problems with the above reasoning in this document, namely:

- 1) the IMCB does not in practice receive reports from the public – these reports would much more likely and more relevantly be directed to the mobile operator, who are the first port of call in any case. Childnet does not believe there is any knowledge of the existence of the IMCB amongst the public, nor has there been any effort to promote this as somewhere to report so, and it would be inappropriate to draw any conclusion about the effectiveness of the current system from the level of public reports to the IMCB. Even if there was an awareness of the IMCB and its remit amongst the public, there is a further barrier making reports to the IMCB unlikely, and that is that it will not be readily apparent to the parent or carer that had found pornography on their child’s phone, for example, whether this content was ‘commercial’ or internet content, ie under the IMCB’s remit or not.
- 2) the Ofcom review⁶ found that the “volumes of consumer complaints to mobile operators may not be a sufficiently reliable gauge of child access to 18-rated material” (p8), so again it would be unreliable to draw any conclusions from this, unless the operators have been recording and sharing the numbers and content of such complaints.
- 3) The IWF do not have a remit to cover reports of children accessing age-inappropriate material, and Ofcom is similarly not perceived by the public as having this role over content.

There would be real advantages for everyone by having a clearer picture here, rather than by basing judgements on this level of evidence, evidence which could conceivably even be misleading. As access to commercial and internet content grows via mobile, including amongst children and young people, it is vital that work is done now to establish a clearer picture of the effectiveness of current policy.

Childnet anticipate children’s access to such content to grow as the prices fall and the mobile devices in children’s hands are those that can access the internet wirelessly. At Childnet we hear anecdotal instances of children accessing and circulating inappropriate material on their mobile phones. More information is needed on how this happens, to what extent this happens, and what can be done in order to help prevent this. The consultation document does point out that this can and does happen by Bluetooth. While Childnet accepts that Bluetooth is outside of the network, the images need to come from somewhere before they are circulated on Bluetooth, and better information here would be invaluable.

2. Do you believe that there is significant demand for a more granular age categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and

⁵ See http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/ml_adult08/

⁶ ‘UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles’ Review Document produced by Ofcom, 11th August 2008.

unrestricted? If so, what age categories do you think would be appropriate? Please explain the reason for your answers.

Yes, there is scope for and there would be great advantages for a more granular categorisation for content available on mobile handsets. This has become much more significant and necessary with both the ever-decreasing age of mobile phone ownership, and the accessibility of social networking sites on mobile services.

8 year-old children, and we know that children of the age of 8 and even younger are using mobile phones, have different and greater needs in terms of protection from content to children aged 16 or 17.

In the absence of more granular classifications than 18 and unrestricted, the provision of social networking services such as Bebo, MySpace and Facebook throws up some challenges with regards to access to these sites on mobile phones. These services should only be available to those 13 or over, so in the instance of classification, it would probably be better for these sites to be 18 rated to ensure that those children under 13 would not be able to access them. Childnet does not believe that this is the case currently, and thus younger children are able to access age inappropriate services.

Providing more granularity would certainly give parents more choice, and this granularity could perhaps be accompanied by handsets with reduced functionality, or functionality more appropriate to the age of the user.

Childnet would recommend strongly that any classifications be the same as other age classifications elsewhere in order to reduce confusion by having consistency across media.

3. How do you feel about the approach mobile operators take to chatrooms and social network sites and do you support the stricter moderation requirements for mobile based chat rooms that mobile operators have put in place?

There are very real child protection advantages for the moderation of chat services, and in the context of this Code it is very important that 'commercial' chatrooms are moderated. Chat environments where children can interact with people that they only know online do have potential risks, and these risks are compounded on mobile phones due to the personal nature of the device and the fact that they are very private and an impossible medium for parents to supervise. The personal and private nature of the mobile phone is amply demonstrated by the fact that it has been used in most grooming cases at some stage, usually the latter stages of the process.

Moderation, as outlined by the Home Office Good practice guidance for the moderation of interactive services for children⁷, is most effective if done by a person rather than by software, though there are advantages in both approaches being used simultaneously. It is very welcome that the social networking sites provided by the MOs are moderated and it would be useful to hear how these services are moderated, whether it is pre- or post moderated for example, and whether they use human or technical moderation or both.

Childnet note that in this consultation it is outlined that where operators provide access to third party social network providers, which would then be classified as 'commercial content' or services under the Code, mobile operators "use their influence to encourage all providers to comply with the Home Secretary's Task Force Good Practice Guidelines for providers of social networking sites and user interactive services" (p8). Childnet accept that this proposed addition to the Code social network providers are expected to follow the recommendations included in this good practice guidance, however we do see this as a weakening of the protections that were originally included in the mobile operators code. Because mobile phones are different to accessing the internet and applications on a home computer, there were additional requirements in terms of moderation put on chatrooms that mobile operators

⁷ See <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/operational-policing/moderation.pdf?view=Binary>

have some control over (ie commercial chat) to ensure that children are better protected here. The same differences continue to apply about accessing content and services on mobile, relating to the personal and private nature of the device and the difficulty of parents to supervise apply. It is because of these differences that mobile operators need to do more than 'encourage' social network providers, and should use the contracts they sign with these third parties to stipulate adherence to at least some key criteria from the Good practice guidance. The issues Childnet would recommend to be included here would be timely safety advice when uploading content, an acknowledgement and an estimated response time to reports given to those reporting, moderation in some form of images being posted up from mobile, and profiles private by default for those who are not age verified as over 18. Childnet does not agree that social networking sites which can be classified as 'commercial content', i.e. the mobile operator has a contractual relationship with, should fall outside the Code. There was already a Good practice guidance on chat provision (Jan 2003) before the Mobile Code came into effect, and yet chat was necessary to tackle in the code. Social networking is the same, and Childnet would see potential risks to children if social networking wasn't addressed in the Code.

4. Bearing in mind that mobile operators do not control the content available on the internet, do you think that there are any other options available to limit children's access to adult content on a mobile device? If so, how do you envisage this will work?

Childnet strongly recommend that filters for the Internet accessed via mobile phones to be set on by default. In a similar way that content controls on commercial content are set on by default, the filters should be on until the user has gone through a process of age verification.

Childnet would like to see exploration for filters to be at the Handset level. As more and more mobile devices have the capability of not using the mobile operators network and accessing the internet for free on existing wireless networks, the child protection filtering measures would not currently protect children here. Filtering that could be activated at the network level on the handset – there is precedent for this – could be a way of continuing the effectiveness of the filter even for these circumstances. The precedent here is from the treatment of Bluetooth in Germany where mobile operators can and have taken responsibility for protecting children from accessing and being exposed to content in this way, where the mobile network disabled Bluetooth on the handset⁸. Activating a filter for the handset in this way would be a crucial step in protecting children for when they access the Internet outside of the mobile networks.

5. Do stakeholders have any comment about the handling of illegal content by the mobile operators?

It is good that all the Mobile Operators all support the IWF and that all use the list from the IWF. Childnet is interested to know why this is not currently part of the Code, and would suggest that it could be included in the code to serve as best practice example to others.

6. Do stakeholders have any comments or suggestions about how to reduce unsolicited messages?

It is Childnet's experience that one of the biggest problems that young people face is being 'ripped off' by premium rate services, including receiving repeated messages that they consider to be unsolicited. It is important for the mobile operators to work with Phonepayplus to help better inform and protect children on this topic, making sure they know what to do when they do have difficulties, particularly know how to stop such a service.

⁸ See http://www.fsm.de/inhalt.doc/StatementFSMChildSafetyMobilePhones_en.pdf, p2, "T-Mobile (CombiCard Teens) and Vodafone (CallYa Junior Card), offer services and rates specifically fitted for the needs of juveniles, offering partly the opportunity to bar and block e.g. the Bluetooth-interface, access to portals, MMS- and GPRS/UMTS-services".

7. Do stakeholders agree with the approach or have any other comments (re malicious communications)

Yes, it is very important to educate customers, making sure that they know what to do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, as well as information about not becoming a cyberbully and good practice in using their phone (for example asking permission when taking or using a picture of someone).

The support the mobile operators give those who are the targets of cyberbullying is very important and valuable.

8. Do stakeholders have any comments about mobile operators' approach to giving information and advice or any suggestions as to what further measures might be practical and helpful?

There have been good initiatives in providing information and advice to consumers and the provision of resources for schools and teachers in this area.

However, much more needs to be done to raise awareness about the services available on mobile phones owned by children, the potential risks facing children on mobiles, and the protections and advice that is on offer to help. The Mobile operators in the UK do provide tools for parents to use to help protect their children, but information about these tools is not effectively reaching parents currently. Childnet does not agree with there being an *information overload*, as suggested in the consultation, and are unsure why this is felt to apply in this area of child protection. There are many ways to communicate to this audience, and reach and reinforce consumer education with clear consistent messages. Indeed, it is difficult to balance the idea of information overload with the Ofcom report finding that the availability of consumer information in this area was lacking, and the subsequent recommendation that "mobile operators redouble their efforts to ensure information supplied by retailers, customer services and websites is easy to understand and accessible" (p3). Education and empowerment of parents and carers and children is crucial for their safe and responsible use of this technology, and Childnet agree with the Ofcom report that more needs to be done here.

There is a commitment in the Code to have the Code on the websites of the mobile operators. In fact the Code is currently not on mobile operators websites, or if so is very difficult to find. Having said that, it is not likely that parents would go to look for the Code on an operator's website, particularly if they are not aware of its existence. The commitments in the Code must be communicated in a more relevant and engaging way. There have been leaflets produced by many mobile operators, as well as content on websites, and this is very welcome. However, it was disappointing to see the results of the Mystery Shopping in the Ofcom review. It found that there "was little customer information visible in the stores – this was absent in 151 of the 160 stores visited" (p13). That is a staggering 94% of stores. 94% of stores had no leaflets in them – it is one thing to produce the leaflet, it another to get it into stores and into the hands of the parent customer at the time of purchase. This is the best time and a great opportunity to reach parents with this information, enabling them to set up the phone and pass on key advice to their child before the child starts using it. There are challenges to face in getting retail to better support customers in this area, but this timely advice is so valuable, and just by ensuring the retailer asks each customer "Is this phone for you (or is it for a child)? could make a great difference.

Childnet consistently find that parents are not aware of the services available on their children's phones, nor of the protections available to them. This finding is reinforced by other findings from Ofcom's research and Mystery Shopping research for example, showing that often⁹ parents are not given good advice at the point of sale. It is so important for advice to be given to the parent at this point, the very point before they give the phone to their child. The Code and the protections the operators provide are not well communicated to parents. It is

⁹ Although the majority of stores in the Ofcom review's mystery shopping exercise did either give detailed (40%) or limited information (20%) on how the child protection systems work, 40% either offered no advice or gave no explanation of how child protection systems work.

vital to improve this. In order to respond to this need Childnet developed a Checklist for Parents to assist in communicating the protections offered by mobile operators to children, see <http://www.childnet.com/downloads/mobilesQ.pdf>. To date this has been taken up and used by O2¹⁰ to communicate these messages to parents.

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¹⁰ The Checklist was used online and in publications in retail stores, together with a programme to develop a culture of child protection understanding and knowledge throughout the company. 100 child protection champions from within O2 volunteered to help spread these important messages and work to ensure that staff would be equipped to assist and inform customers on these issues.

4. The Children's Charities Coalition on Internet Safety (CHIS)



Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety

CHIS welcomes the opportunity to respond to this review. We note that many of the mobile phone companies have so far been industry leaders in relation to safety and technical safeguards, and we welcome the fact that the Mobile Broadband Group is consulting now to ensure its code stays up to date with technological developments.

Q1 Do you agree with the way mobile phone operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access areas is the right approach? If not, what else do you feel could be done?

We strongly agree with the use of access controls and consider that adult content should always be behind a clearly signposted adult bar which the adult contract holder has to agree to remove. This helps to create a default safety net which prevents children's access to upsetting and disturbing content on their phones. We think it is essential that all the operators apply such access controls by default and that access controls should be applied even when the mobile phone is on a pay-as-you-go contract. It is also essential that there is clear information and advice to parents on the implications of removing the adult bar. The OFCOM review suggests there is a great deal of progress still to make in relation to consumer education and the advice given in stores. A substantial proportion of customers received no advice about protecting their children despite specifically requesting it. In the recent OFCOM review of the code it was found that 3 in 10 customers received no information or advice. We take your point that the OFCOM study did not distinguish, in this respect, between the customer experience in own brand stores, as opposed to more generic stores such as "Carphone Warehouse" and "Phones4U" but at one level, from a child safety perspective, that is irrelevant. We think that advice should be offered proactively to all customers and the major networks should exert whatever influence they can on other outlets of their products to ensure a broadly comparable customer experience in each retail environment. We agree with the recommendation in the OFCOM review that sellers should try to determine the age of the phone user during the sale in order to provide the advice where necessary.

We are also keen to encourage the mobile phone operators to consider ways that they could develop greater granularity and a more refined and age differentiated approach to the availability of content. There is of course an enormous difference between content that is appropriate for a 17 year old and that which would be appropriate for a 9 year old. As the OFCOM review noted 'It is possible under the current mobile content controls for a 9 year old child to access material deemed by the BBFC framework as suitable only for children older than 12 or 15 years. Age-inappropriate content could include suggestive underwear modelling, topless imagery

and moderate violence, all of which are outside the current IMCB Classification Framework' (OFCOM, 2008: 15). In that context, it is important to note the finding by OFCOM that 56% of 8-11 year olds and 90% of 12-15 year olds have their own mobile phone. It is therefore important to explore ways to ensure that younger children cannot access content that has been deemed by the competent authorities, in this case the BBFC, as being suitable only for older children. This anomaly needs to be resolved.

We agree with the point made in the consultation document that a more granular approach needs to be developed in conjunction with internet access and filtering otherwise there is simply a discrepancy in the protection provided based on where the content is sourced from rather than the nature of the content itself or how it is made available to children. This discrepancy simply makes no sense from a child protection point of view which should simply focus on the ways in which children are vulnerable to inappropriate content. We would urge the members of the mobile broadband group to consider ways of doing this even where it might depend on relying on third party filtering suppliers.

It is important to keep in mind children's very considerable distress when they see violent or sexual content when they are very young. Although we accept the point made in the consultation document that the volume of complaints either to key public bodies such as OFCOM or the IWF or to the operators themselves has not been overwhelming we do think that the lack of complaint volume can not necessarily be understood to indicate that there is no problem in relation to content. Parents may not understand how the access control systems work, may not understand the technology very well, and may simply not know what kinds of content their children can access. Also, when they become aware that their child has accessed something unsuitable they may not know if this is the operator's fault or not as this may not be immediately obvious to them. In relation to the new technologies and their children's safety, we know that parents are often not sure what their children are doing and may feel disempowered to the point where they are not motivated to make complaints or demand changes to the way services are provided. As the Byron review found parents do not realise how often children come across potentially harmful or inappropriate content on the internet and when it does happen they tend not to know where to direct their concerns. She notes that more socially disadvantaged and vulnerable parents in particular feel disempowered and at a loss. We would suggest that the situation may well be similar in relation to content on mobiles and internet accessed through mobiles.

Question 2

Do you believe there is significant demand for a more granular age categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and unrestricted? If so what age categories would be appropriate? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

We have outlined above why such a development would be the right step to take from an ethical point of view. We think that at the very least the operator should encourage this approach and the low level of complaints can not be taken as an indicator that further development in this respect is disproportionate.

We agree that children develop in different ways and at different stages and actual age may provide a crude marker of the developmental stage which a child or young person has reached. Nonetheless law and practice in the UK does rely on age categories to understand and interpret the needs and provision for children at

different ages. We think it would be sensible for age categories to fall in line with the BBFC framework of age bands.

Q3 How do you feel about the approach the mobile phone operators take to chat rooms and social network sites and do you support the stricter moderation requirements for mobile based chatrooms that mobile operators have put in place?

We strongly support the strict moderation controls for mobile phone based chat rooms and we do consider that this is the responsible and appropriate standard to set. We do, however, note the increasing discrepancy between safety measures offered by an increasing number of mainstream internet based service providers and those that are available on mobile services. While we support the good practice guidelines developed by the Home Office Task Force we think it is clear that social networking services still offer a degree of un-moderated interactivity that puts children at risk and exposes children to upsetting and inappropriate content. In that context, leaving social networking sites in front of the adult bar seems to us to be an error. The industry standards in relation to the review of content and its removal are diverse. We note the comments made by "Google/ You Tube" to the Home Affairs Select Committee on harmful content on the Internet that they consider it unrealistic to moderate content proactively on their sites. The committee did not agree with this position stating explicitly 'We found the arguments put forward by Google/You Tube against their staff undertaking any kind of proactive screening to be unconvincing' (2008: 76).

Given this situation we would urge the leading mobile phone operators both to support the new UK Council on Child Internet Safety to ensure that issues surrounding content on social networking sites are addressed and resolved either through setting an agreed benchmark of good practice or through regulation, and we would strongly encourage the mobile operators to ensure that they are in a position to offer clear guidance for parents and age controls to ensure that younger children cannot access such services.

Q4 Bearing in mind that mobile operators do not control the content available on the internet, do you think there are any other options available to limit children's access to content over a mobile device? If so how do you envisage this would work?

We think all mobile operators should set the 18 filter for internet services on by default. This provides an essential first step safety net for parents and children. We also think that the mobile phone industry could step up their levels of advice and information to parents to ensure that parents fully understand the implications of allowing access to the internet and think through the very specific risks that allowing access on a mobile phone might present.

We think it is important the mobile operators develop the capacity to offer greater granularity in relation to age controls on internet content. We understand this may be technically difficult but we think it is important in order to ensure that the code and the child protection principles on which the code is based are not undermined as more and more internet services and access are offered through mobiles. It is important to acknowledge the personal and private nature of children mobile phone use which presents specific risks that are not comparable to children's use of a desktop computer in their family home. We also think that the increasing use of the internet on mobiles is clearly the direction of travel for children and it would be more far sighted for the industry to develop options for granularity and explore ways this could

be carried out. The mobile networks need to engage with the handset manufacturers so as to ensure that they are playing their full part in the safety mission.

Q5 Do stakeholders have any comments about the handling of illegal content by mobile operators?

We are not aware of any problems in relation to the handling of illegal content

Q6 Do stakeholders have any comments or suggestions about how to reduce unsolicited messages?

Q7 Do stakeholder agree with the approach or have any other comments?

We strongly welcome the proactive engagement in of the industry in their anti-bullying work and we would urge them to continue their efforts in this respect.

Q8 Do stakeholders have any comments about mobile operators' approach to giving customers information and advice or any suggestions as to what further measures might be practical and helpful?

We welcome that most of the protections are installed by default. We think that the mobile broadband group should strongly urge all of its members to ensure that default settings are set onto the phone. This raises once again the potential role of the handset manufacturers.

The OFCOM review showed that there is some good information and advice given to parents about safety issues but it also outlined very clearly that further progress could be made in proactively educating parents about child safety information and we feel that the point of sale is a particular opportunity to do this. The fact that mobile phones can be bought through many different channels in no way absolves the network of their responsibility to act in relation to their own direct selling operations. Rather it ought to encourage all of the networks, perhaps acting together, to exert greater influence over the other channels.

We accept that customers receive a great deal of information when they are buying a phone and may risk feeling overloaded. We also acknowledge and welcome the fact that there are other sources of advice available through the website and phone lines operators provide. However, we do take the view that point of sale provides a critical opportunity to raise awareness with parents who may not have thought about the issues, educate them and provide face to face demonstrations of key mobile phone services and safety features. It also may be an opportunity to provide easy to use and understandable materials to parents and carers to help them understand key child safety issues. The OFCOM mystery shopped found that that printed material was offered in 5 visits out of 160 and that in 151 visits there was no visible customer information.

5. Microsoft

Microsoft Response to the Mobile Broadband Group's review of the "UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles"

7 November 2008

As a provider of mobile platforms and services in the UK and across the EU, Microsoft welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Mobile Broadband Group's (MBG) review of the "UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles." By creating and implementing the Code, operators have demonstrated their commitment to help keep children safe while using their mobiles online.

Microsoft shares this commitment and places a high priority on helping to keep children safe online. As a signatory to the Broadband Stakeholder's Group's "Good Practice Principles on Audiovisual Content Information," Microsoft is firmly committed to providing parents and caregivers the information they need to help make informed choices about family- appropriate content, and the tools they need to help manage that content.

Microsoft believes that self-regulation of content by the mobile industry provides the best opportunity for helping to keep children safe while providing the most opportunity for rapid innovation and rapid deployment of new converged consumer experiences for mobile. With this in mind, Microsoft applauds the MBG and its vigilance in continuing to self-review the mobile code of practice introduced in 2004. Ofcom's recent review of the Code, along with the MBG's self review affirms that self-regulation is working to keep children safe while using mobiles.

While affirming that the Code is working well, Microsoft supports the ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness. Microsoft also supports evaluating potential changes to the Code to address issues introduced by broader availability of emerging and evolving forms of mobile content and services.

Microsoft responses to consultation questions:

Consultation Q1: Do you agree that the way mobile operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access areas is the right approach? If not, what else do you feel could be done?"

Microsoft agrees with the MBG recommendation regarding content information, "that mobile operators continue to follow the Good Practice Principles on Audio Visual Content Information – principally by providing appropriate signposting for their own portal content and using access controls for adult content."

Both Ofcom's review of the Code and MGB's self-review indicate that there have been a negligible number of reports of minors viewing 18 classified content on their mobiles. This suggests that the current implementation of the code by operators is effective and indicates no need for extensive change. Microsoft supports the industry's self-imposed "yellow card/red-card" mechanism for managing breaches of the Code and agrees with Ofcom's recommendation to make this mechanism more visible to the public by publishing on the Independent Mobile Classification Board's web site the number of yellow and red cards issued.

Consultation Q2: "Do you believe that there is significant demand for a more granular age categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and unrestricted? If so, what age categories do you think would be appropriate? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Microsoft does not see significant consumer demand for more granular age categorisations and agrees with the MBG's recommendation "that content providers continue only to self-classify as **18** content unsuitable for customers under 18, in accordance with the Independent Mobile Classification Board's (IMCB) classification framework."

While continued monitoring of the effectiveness of the current binary system is warranted, the low rate of failures of the system suggests that there is no need to complicate the code with more granular age categorisations at this time. More granular categorisations could increase inconsistencies across countries that would in all likelihood create their own age categorisations based on regional cultural sensitivities. This would impede the ability of content and service providers to provide a variety of cost effective content in the UK and across the EU.

Microsoft believes that for most content types, the issue of granular age categorisations can be solved with clear, descriptive information about content that is available online at the point of acquisition (the MBG self-review indicates this is already the case with most content providers). However, at the point in time when mobile gaming becomes ubiquitous and the content is as consistently diverse and rich as in games created for dedicated gaming platforms, utilising an existing ratings and classification system that is well known across the EU, like PEGI, could be beneficial. This is consistent with the conclusions of the Byron Review Report, which notes that more granular age categorisations may become necessary, but recommends only that the UK Council for Child Internet Safety monitor the "changing risks for children from mobile internet access."¹¹

Consultation Q3: How do you feel about the approach the mobile operators take to chat rooms and social network sites and do you support the stricter

¹¹ Tanya Byron, *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review*, 27 March 2008, 105

moderation requirements for mobile based chat rooms that mobile operators have put in place?"

Microsoft agrees that the current approach to managing operator provided chat rooms need not be amended, and supports clarification that the Code should apply only to mobile-based commercial chat rooms.

Microsoft strongly believes that social networking services available on the internet generally (*i.e.* Facebook, Live Spaces, etc.) should not be subject to different “mobile” rules simply because these properties can now be accessed from mobile devices. This principle should hold true whether these social networking sites are accessed through mobile web browsers or through dedicated applications that are simply mobile-optimized user interfaces for accessing and using these internet properties. Maintaining different rules for mobile in this context would be technically challenging and could lead to consumer confusion.

Consultation Q4: Bearing in mind that mobile operators do not control the content available on the internet, do you think that there are any other options available to limit children's access to adult content over a mobile device? If so, how do you envisage this would work?"

Microsoft agrees with the MGB and with the Byron Review Report that the filters offered by operators that are set to filter out content approximately equivalent to commercial content with a classification of 18, are currently effective and no new levels of filtering need to be implemented at this time. Microsoft applauds those operators who have chosen to have these filter turned “on” as a default to ensure children are protected in the event their parents are not aware of the option to enable the filter.

Microsoft also believes that filtering implementations are best handled by operators at the network level. There are efficiencies to doing this type of filtering at the network level that could not be realized on mobile devices.

Consultation Q5: Do stakeholders have any comments about the handling of illegal content by the mobile operators?

Microsoft has been a leader in building robust “notice and takedown” mechanisms into its internet properties. Microsoft supports the current Code with respect to illegal content and would be a proponent of the Code being amended to directly reference the Internet Watch Foundation, the UK’s hotline for reporting illegal content.

Consultation Q6: Do stakeholders have any comments or suggestions about how to reduce unsolicited messages?

Microsoft has no comment at this time.

Consultation Q7: Do stakeholders agree with the approach or have any other comments?

Microsoft agrees that additional education along with existing technical solutions is the best way to help protect children from the types of malicious communications referred to in the Code, *i.e.* cyber bullying, harassment and “happy slapping.” Educational efforts are greatly enhanced when services provide mechanisms for reporting abuse, and when operators take action on abuse reports. In addition to abuse reporting mechanisms, Microsoft recommends that operators have mechanisms in place to provide appropriate data to law enforcement authorities in the event that malicious communications cross a line and become criminal. Microsoft has both of these safeguards in place for its consumer internet services, and several of Microsoft’s mobile applications that utilise these services take advantage of these safeguards.

Consultation Q8: Do stakeholders have any comments about mobile operators’ approach to giving customers information and advice or any suggestions as to what further measures might be practical and helpful?

Microsoft believes that educating parents and children about online safety issues can be one of the most important and effective tools for helping children to stay safer online. Microsoft is pleased that the Code specifically calls for operators to provide information regarding “the nature and use of new mobile devices and services.” As a provider of mobile services in the UK, Microsoft will continue to explore opportunities to join operators in these educational efforts.

* * *

Microsoft welcomes the opportunity to discuss our views in greater detail. Please contact Paul Morris, Head of Government Affairs, Microsoft Limited on 0203 139 6279 or at paulmor@microsoft.com or Jim Beveridge, Senior Director of International Policy & Standards on 0796 899 6079 or at jimbev@microsoft.com.

6. MX Telecom

Consultation document for the Mobile Broadband Group's review of the "UK code of practice for the self-regulation of new forms of content on mobiles"

11th November 2008

Consultation Q1: Do you agree that the way mobile operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access areas is the right approach? If not, what else do you feel could be done?

Yes. Most importantly, access controls ensure only mobile users over the age of 18 are able to access adult "new forms" of content. The common sense provisions of The Good Practice Principles on Audio Visual Content Information also assist in appropriately signposting content. The absence of complaints in this area demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach taken.

Consultation Q2: Do you believe that there is a significant demand for a more granular categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and unrestricted? If so, what age categories do you think would be appropriate? Please explain reasons for your answer.

We are not aware of many, if any, complaints from consumers regarding the current level of granularity being inappropriate. Commercially, it has not been our experience or feedback from a number of hundred clients that there is any real demand for a more granular categorisation of content covered by the code of practice for new forms of mobile content.

Consultation Q3: How do you feel about the approach the mobile operators take to chat rooms and social network sites and do you support the stricter moderation requirements for mobile based chat rooms that mobile operators have put in place?

We support the strict approach taken by the networks in respect of mobile-based commercial chat rooms. We are not positioned to have a view on the merits of the different approach and distinction drawn against social networking sites.

Consultation Q4: Bearing in mind that mobile operators do not control the content available on the internet, do you think that there are any other options available to limit children's access to adult content over a mobile device? If so, how do you envisage this would work?

We believe that the Internet filtering employed by the mobile networks, with classification in line with the code of practice, is currently a very effective means of preventing children's access to adult content over a mobile device. We agree that the changing risks for children from mobile internet access should continue to be monitored to ensure this remains sufficient.

Consultation Q5: Do stakeholders have any comments about the handling of illegal content by the mobile operators?

We do not have any comments.

Consultation Q6: Do stakeholders have any comments or suggestions about how to reduce unsolicited messages?

Whilst mobile customers do not receive spam at levels approaching that experienced on fixed PC's via e-mail, the mobile is a more personal means of communication, the receipt of such communications is therefore more intrusive and the tolerance for any unsolicited communications must accordingly be significantly less. PhonepayPlus are currently addressing the unacceptable proliferation of unsolicited messages through their Mobile Review, the outcome of which is due during the next few weeks. For unsolicited messaging to be effectively reduced, practical, auditable and specific examples of acceptable consumer opt-in to receive messages (particularly third party messages) must be required by PhonepayPlus. The continuation of current policies in this area would be wholly inadequate.

Consultation Q7: Do stakeholders agree with the approach or have any other comments?

We agree with the approach taken.

Consultation Q8: Do stakeholders have any comments about mobile operators' approach to giving customers information and advice or any suggestions as to what further measures might be practical and helpful?

We believe that the mobile operator approach is the correct one; with protections fundamentally built in rather than requiring the assimilation of vast amounts of disparate information.

Conclusion

Whilst this Consultation rightly focuses on the effectiveness of the code in ensuring children do not have access to inappropriate content, it does not consider the lack of success of the code in enabling mobile users over the age of 18 to access content appropriate to their age. Whilst the majority of mobile users are over the age of 18, only a small fraction of that number are considered over 18 for the purposes of having access to new forms of content on mobile. The paucity of commercial services available specifically to mobile users and only suitable to users over the age of 18, reflects that the code has gone beyond successfully preventing access to minors, and also significantly restricts those over the age of 18 from accessing appropriate content. We would welcome a review of why existing age verification statistics do not reflect the age of network user bases, such that against a background of child protection, appropriate content for those over 18 can become a realistic commercial proposition.

7. Steljes

Hamish,

Please see below our response to your recent consultation. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss further.

Consultation Q1: Do you agree that the way mobile operators currently signpost content on their portals and use access controls to signpost restricted access areas is the right approach? If not, what else do you feel could be done?"

We strongly believe that content providers should be looking to classify their content in line with the BBFC framework (or similar) not only to minimise the level of access to age inappropriate content but also to provide reassurance to parents and those with a duty of care. Technology is available to provide this and content partners are willing to age classify not only at the level of above/below 18 but also at all age stages.

Consultation Q2: "Do you believe that there is significant demand for a more granular age categorisation for content available on mobile handsets, rather than simply 18 and unrestricted? If so, what age categories do you think would be appropriate? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Yes. We strongly believe that an internet filtering systems should be established to classify web content in line with the BBFC framework. Although practice to date may indicate only a relatively low level of interest in this level of granularity, recent research by the Children's Rights Director for England indicated that children themselves feel very strongly that "Children should be kept safe on the internet by blocking unsuitable sites and chatrooms". Furthermore, the Byron report indicated that if this technology were available then it should be something that should be further investigated. The technology is now available providing internet filtering at least as good as delivered in many schools (Becta have themselves accredited a number of providers) and this is being made available across mobile as well as fixed line networks

Consultation Q3: How do you feel about the approach the mobile operators take to chat rooms and social network sites and do you support the stricter moderation requirements for mobile based chat rooms that mobile operators have put in place?"

Yes we fully support this approach but feel that it could go further. Technology is increasingly available to identify inappropriate communications not only within chat rooms but also across social networking sites and we believe that this should be supported by all mobile operators.

Consultation Q4: Bearing in mind that mobile operators do not control the content available on the internet, do you think that there are any other options available to limit children's access to adult content over a mobile device? If so, how do you envisage this would work?"

We believe that existing and accredited web filtering technology combined with the development of a practical method for validating children's ages can be used to significantly improve the access to websites containing age inappropriate content not only for above/below 18 but also at all age levels

Consultation Q5: Do stakeholders have any comments about the handling of illegal content by the mobile operators?

We believe that not only should the IWF database be a cornerstone of any web filtering technology but also that access to the internet should be reinforced at all age levels as more than one million children between the age of 5-9 are estimated to have a mobile phone .

Consultation Q6: Do stakeholders have any comments or suggestions about how to reduce unsolicited messages?

Deployment of more effective spam and web filtering technology within the networks

Consultation Q7: Do stakeholders agree with the approach or have any other comments?

We believe that a combination of technology, mediation and education are the best strategies for reducing the potential for mobile technologies to contribute to cyber-bullying. Certainly, technologies are increasingly available that can potentially identify interaction that could lead to cyber-bullying or highlight inappropriate communications between people.

Many thanks

Martin

Martin Large
Group Chief Executive

8. Useful Networks

Dear Hamish,

Apologies for the late submission of my comments. I met Mark Hawkins last week at the MMA event, who happened to mention you and the deadline, that had just passed.

I have been with Useful Networks as their London-based Business Development Director since October. You may be aware that Useful Networks has active and passive LBS in its portfolio. One of the passive LBS, SNIFF, the Social Network Integrated Friend Finder, was marketed heavily, but about 70% of users did not make it past their carrier's age-verification process for simple implementation reasons. The product is a great success story in Sweden and Denmark and is not commercially viable in the UK due to the carriers' current age-verification processes.

I would thus like to submit the following four points related to the implementation of age-verification mechanisms by UK mobile operators:

1. **Product Naming/Terminology:** For example "Adult content filter" is an extremely poor way to describe an age-verification barrier. Women or strongly Christian users, who want to use e.g. LBS or chat services are put off this label immediately. Simply "content filter" would be sufficient.
2. **Ergonomics:** It is not at all obvious to the user what to do (e.g. call customer services via short code etc) if they want to become age-verified. Furthermore using Experian/credit-card databases as an age-checker only is not sufficient as it excludes individuals without credit cards.
3. **Progressive Age-Verification:** Carriers should implement AV processes that differentiate between under 16s, over 16s and over 18s. The current Experian/18+ only mechanism excludes those users 16-17, who might want to use passive LBS or chat services.
4. **AV User Databases:** Contract users should not need to age-verify themselves. Carriers should ask all their existing post-pay subscribers to be "white-listed" as well as all the one ones as they join. Furthermore, carriers should notify their pre-pay customers on their birthdays that they are able to reduce their filters as they get past the thresholds.

In summary, these measures would help to streamline the carriers' AV process making products requiring an age-verified user base due to regulation available to a larger potential user base. These products currently suffer commercially due to the practical difficulties of the AV process.

We strongly believe that implementing the above measures would help make the UK a more dynamic and buoyant marketplace for innovative services than it already is.

I look forward to your feedback.

Kind regards,

Boh

Boh Tjarks
Director of Business Development

useful**networks** europe

9. The Internet Watch Foundation (separate file)