



Digital Economy Bill

Factsheet – Age Verification for Online Pornography (clauses 15-25)

What are we going to do?

- introduce age verification checks for access to all websites and “apps” containing pornographic material
- protect children from content that is not suitable for them, and can potentially harm them
- ensure that our offline laws and protections are also applicable online, as children increasingly live their lives online

Baroness Shields, Minister for Internet Safety and Security, said:

“We will help make sure children aren’t exposed to harmful sexualised content online by requiring age verification for access to commercial sites containing pornographic material.

“Just as we do in the offline world, we want to make sure that online content that is only suitable for adults is not freely accessible to children.”

How are we going to do it?

- introduce a new requirement in law for commercial providers to establish robust age verification controls for online pornographic content in the UK
- establish a new regulatory framework backed by civil sanctions to monitor, notify and enforce compliance with the law
- work with payments providers (Visa, Mastercard, Paypal and others) and ancillary services to enable them to withdraw their services from infringing sites

Background

The UK leads the world in online child protection, and a great deal of progress has been made since 2010 through successful partnership working - between government, internet service providers, mobile network operators, and charities. However, we must not be complacent. Given the rate of technological change, we must always be mindful of the need to review and revise our approach to protecting children online and ensure they enjoy the many benefits of the internet.



The easy availability and nature of online pornography is changing the way children and young people understand healthy relationships, sex and consent. Every child has a right to develop at their own pace. Our aim is to protect children in their online lives from seeing pornographic content that can upset and cause potential harm.

The government committed to requiring age verification in its Manifesto: 'We will stop children's exposure to harmful sexualised content online, by requiring age verification for access to all sites containing pornographic material.'

Key Questions and Answers

- **Most porn sites are based overseas, how will you enforce this law against these sites/companies?**

The aim of our policy is to capture all sites, both foreign and domestic with a proportionate regulatory approach. We will focus on commercial providers of pornography, ensuring that the new legal requirement, and regulatory framework underpinning it, capture these.

- **What is government doing to address the availability of “free” pornography sites?**

It is absolutely our intention to capture all commercial sites that provide porn, whether this is paid for directly, or ‘free’ sites that are used as a ‘shop window’ for paid services.

- **Technology will always stay one step ahead of legislation, how will government future-proof this policy?**

Our drafting will allow for flexibility and we will continue to work closely with industry to monitor progress and latest technological developments to ensure key growth areas such as “apps” are covered under scope.