



Growing Up in the Online World

(What the new rules mean for you)

Why are changes happening?

Our aim is for every young person to have the best start in life.

We asked people all across the UK how to make the online world better for children, and 116,211 people shared their ideas, including children, parents, teachers, as well as many organisations.

Now we are getting ready to make changes so young people can use technology in safer and more positive ways.

This is not the end. This document explains the government's main plans now, and there will be another update in July. Parliament will have to approve the new laws before any plans come into effect.

Children were at the heart of this consultation: we heard from at least 14,000 children through the consultation and 100s of events right across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What young people said:

- being online can be fun and helpful. It can help children stay in touch with friends, boost wellbeing, access useful AI tools and is helpful for learning
- but children also worry about:
 - seeing upsetting content
 - online bullying
 - spending too much time online
 - other risky features, such as the ability for strangers to contact them

The goal is to make the online world safer, fairer and better for your wellbeing. To make it a good place to spend your time. We want it to be a place where you can feel in control of how you use it, not controlled by it.

What is changing?

- Some social media apps or websites will no longer be able to offer their services to under-16s. And some AI chatbots and chatbot features designed for adults will no longer be available for under-18s.
- Other apps and websites (like gaming services) will need to change to be safer for children by removing the ability of young people to livestream themselves, and the ability for strangers to talk to them.
- These functionalities will be switched off as standard for older teenagers between 16 and 17 but they will be able to switch them on.

Is social media being banned?

Two thirds of children who responded to the consultation told us that they would support age restrictions for under 16s on at least some social media. 90% of parents told us they would support under-16s not being allowed on social media.

Social media companies will be banned from offering their services to under-16s. The government believes that this is the clearest and simplest way to drive change.

We are aiming to follow a similar model to Australia as a starting point which means that similar platforms will be captured.

In Australia this includes services like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X, YouTube, Kick and Reddit.

We heard lots of positive things from children about their online experiences, like talking to friends, learning new things and being creative. We want to make sure there are still ways you can do these things online and offline.

What will happen to existing social media accounts once restrictions come in?

If you are under 16, you won't be able to keep your social media accounts once the rules come in. Platforms will need to switch these off or pause them until you are old enough.

Will I be able to go on social media under 16 with my parents' permission?

No. Under these rules, social media apps or websites will not be allowed to offer their services to children under 16, even if you have permission from your parent or carer.

How do I stay connected with friends if I lose access to social media?

You will still be able to stay connected with your friends and family in other ways. Children will still be able to use messaging services and other online services, and we want to make sure there are positive ways for children to connect, learn and have fun offline too.

Will I learn more about this at school?

Yes. There are plans for children to learn more about the online world at school, including how to stay safe, think critically about what they see online, and understand how social media and AI can affect them.

What proof of age will I need? How will I get it?

You may need to prove your age to use some online services. The government wants these age checks to be reliable, but we will provide further information on this later in the year. Ofcom, the independent regulator, are looking at the options.

What about overnight 'curfews'?

Young people have told us that social media can make it hard to switch off and get the right amount of sleep. We hope the ban will change this for under-16s.

In July, we will set out our final decision on an optional nighttime curfew on social media between midnight and 6 am for 16 and 17 year olds. This means overnight restrictions would be on as standard, but could be turned off by individuals.

Before taking this decision, we will look at the evidence from some pilots the government is running where children are seeing if curfews are having a positive impact on them.

What about other services?

As part of the consultation, children told us that they are worried about certain features available to them in the online world, and would support further restrictions on them:

- talking to or sharing photos and videos with people you don't know
- livestreaming yourself (broadcasting live video) to people

Through the consultation, children told us that they support restricting these functionalities: Sending explicit images (63%), connecting to strangers (49%) and livestreaming (45%).

Because of this:

- services such as gaming services will not be able to offer these features to under-16s
- if you are 16 or 17, these features will be turned off unless you choose to switch them on yourself

What about AI chatbots?

AI chatbots are tools you can talk to online.

They can be fun and helpful for learning, but:

- some are made for adults
- some might say things that are inappropriate, confusing or not always right
- some might try to keep you chatting for a long time

66% of children who responded to the consultation thought that AI chatbots should have minimum age limits.

So:

- the riskiest ones, designed with adults in mind, will only be for people who are 18 and older
- others will need to be made safer for children by making sure features that allow inappropriate content are not available to under-18s

What will I still be able to do?

You can still use:

- the vast majority of online websites
- school and learning websites
- news and games
- safe ways to message friends and family
- services who redesign their offerings to be safe for children

There will still be **lots of fun and useful things online and offline**. It is important to have open conversations about the ways your parents and carers can support you online. This can help you stay safe, make good choices and get help if something does not feel right.

How will this work?

Relevant companies will need to do a better job of knowing how old their users are.

They might:

- ask for proof of your age
- use accurate technology to estimate how old they think you are

This helps them give you the right experience and keep you safer online. We will make sure these age checks protect young people's privacy.

What does this mean for me now?

Right now, you don't need to do anything. Some of the details are still being worked out and more information on what will happen is coming.

We expect that the ban will be in place in Spring 2027, with additional protections coming soon after.

We know this might be a big change and we are committed to helping support young people to feel ready for it. You won't be in trouble for being on social media, but companies will be responsible for keeping you safe.

What will the government do next?

The government will:

- keep listening to young people and families
- work with experts and companies
- make sure the rules are clear and helpful
- work to make sure young people have opportunities offline to learn, connect and build your confidence

The government wants to make sure you have access to positive activities in real life - like sports, arts, and education. We are working together across government to make sure young people have access to more opportunities offline too.