

Information sheet for research participants and parents: **Children's experiences online**

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this project for Ofcom! This sheet will provide you with information about the project and your involvement. If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our researchers.

About the project

This project is about understanding the experiences that children and young people have online and the impact they can have.

We will be asking your child broadly about their use of technology and the experiences they've had when online. This will include talking about positive experiences they've had online, but also more challenging and potentially upsetting experiences that they may have had. We want to learn more about how children and young people experience the online world, how they behave online, and what impact the online world has on their offline world.

These questions will be open and non-pressurising; we will not be having conversations about any concern(s) that are not raised by the child themselves. We will not be showing them any inappropriate imagery.

In brief, we have been commissioned to carry out this research by Ofcom, the communications regulator, and we will be speaking with 45 children, aged between 8 and 17, (and their parents) across the UK.

The Communications Act 2003 places a responsibility on Ofcom to promote, and to carry out research into, media literacy and this research contributes to Ofcom's work in this area. Media literacy is the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts. This research will also help Ofcom to prepare for their its responsibilities granted by the draft Online Safety Bill. The Bill will require services to fulfil safety duties for all users, taking additional measures to protect children.

The research will result in a presentation of key findings, illustrative video clips and a report, which may be used by Ofcom when presenting the research to internal and external parties, or in written Ofcom reports and publications on Ofcom's website.

Who are we?

Revealing Reality is a research company based in London. We specialise in spending extended periods of time with people to understand what life is really like. All of our researchers have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") checks and have done a lot of work with children and young people.

If you have any further questions about the research, feel free to get in touch with:

Johanna Wiedermann, Project Manager

Email: johanna.wiedermann@revealingreality.co.uk

Telephone: (0)20 7735 8040

What will happen?

This research has three phases: an initial interview, online tasks and tracking, and a follow up interview.

The initial interview

A Revealing Reality researcher will talk to you and your child in person at your home for up to 3 hours. This will include ample opportunities for breaks! With your consent, we will record this interview, video clips of your child's online activities, and take photographs. We will also take notes during the interview, to fully capture answers and discussions more fully.

We will ask your child how they engage with online activities and about the experiences they've had online. This will include asking them about how they deal with things they don't like online, or that worry them.

We may also ask your child to take some photos for us to show us some more information about their media use or to show us how they use technology. This may include screenshots of your child's phone, if they choose to share this with us.

Online tasks

After the initial interview, we will ask your child to share some information about their media activity over a two-week period. Having these additional insights into what participants might be posting beyond what is shared in the interviews can help to build up a richer data set, and potentially a more nuanced set of findings about the child's media behaviour.

This will include a diary task where children will be able to share how media fits into their daily routines, using both written reflections and screenshots of their phone screen or tablet, if they choose to share this.

We will also ask your child to share 'screen record' clips (of around 10-15 minutes), where they record examples of typical media activity on their phone or tablet. This may include their use of social media, video sharing platforms, gaming and search services. Your child will only be asked to share what they are comfortable with researchers seeing, and given guidance on the kind of things to avoid (e.g. security information).

Finally, we'll ask you to consent to having a researcher observe your child's activities on social media for up to two-week period – this means following your child's social media profile(s) to further help us understand what they do online. Any identifying data that is collected during this period of tracking will be removed before the data is used. We term this 'social media tracking'. Researchers will only follow accounts they have permission for, and will not interact with your child at any point (e.g. commenting or liking). This will be done using a 'researcher account' not a personal one. Following this two-week period, researchers will stop following your child's accounts. Revealing Reality will screen record or take a screenshot of the moment when they unfollow the profile(s).

As noted earlier, the information we collect will be used to prepare a report and video clips. This material may include footage of your child, screen shots and photos, but these will not include your child's face or name (we will use a fake name/pseudonym), their friends names, any account names or other contact information, and any personal information.

Follow-up Interview

A Revealing Reality researcher will again talk to you and your child on a video call for about one hour. With your and your child's consent, we will record this interview. We will also take notes during the interview, to again fully capture answers and discussions.

Researchers will ask your child to reflect on data gathered during the tracking tasks, and may ask some additional questions not covered in the initial interview.

Again, we may also ask your child to take some photos for us to show us some more information about their media use or to show us how they use technology. This may include screenshots of your child's phone screen, if they choose to share this with us.

How will the research data be used?

Revealing Reality is carrying out this work for Ofcom. In brief, this means that we will collect the information Ofcom asks us to collect from a set of individuals and for a specific purpose. We will not share the information with third parties or use it for non-specified purposes. Ofcom will use the information we provide for purposes you have consented to, but you and your child may withdraw your consent at any time – this would mean that the information gets deleted at the earliest opportunity (e.g. one working day from request).

How will information be stored:

Information will be kept secure, password protected and handled with care. Revealing Reality will keep your information for the duration of the contract with Ofcom, this is expected to be for a period of about six months. Your information will not be kept for longer than necessary.

How will you and your child's information be used:

We will use the information collected to prepare a presentation with key findings, a report of these findings and video clips on children's media use. These slide packs and video clips may be used by Ofcom in its internal and external communications about children's media use (i.e. the material can be used in presentations, face-to-face or virtually, both here in the UK and abroad, or in a report published on their website). Again, your child's name and any identifiable information will be removed.

To emphasise, the key points you need to know about you and your child's photographs, screen record and video recordings are:

- As part of our delivery of this research to Ofcom, Revealing Reality will be handing over information about you and your child including demographic data (such as age and area of the country you are from), but not your names, address or contact information.
 - The delivery will include stories, your child's answer to questions which may include video clips or screen record clips and photos that you and your child have shared with us. Any information about you or your child will not include any information that will identify you or your child or their online contacts (for example: their friends or followers online) in anyway.
- With your explicit consent, the short video clips we prepare using the video recording of you and your child, and any photographs, screen record clips and screenshots you and your child may share with us, may subsequently be shared by Ofcom as part of presentations given by the Ofcom team to other people working for Ofcom and other professionals interested in children's media use: including professionals from government, academia, research agencies, the voluntary sector and industry. These Ofcom presentations might be delivered in person (i.e. face-to face with the audience) or by virtual means (i.e. the presentation is delivered online). These presentations may be delivered to stakeholders both here in the UK and abroad (e.g. at a conference). In these instances, Ofcom will handle the material with care, explicitly asking the audience not to film the video clips. Also, when showing the video clips, Ofcom will restrict the audience's ability to record the session where possible.

Will you have the chance to review your data?

You are welcome to get in touch with Johanna (contact details provided) to review the photos and video clips before we send these to Ofcom. You can withdraw your consent for future use of some/all of your photographs and video clips at any time, including after you have reviewed them. If you withdraw your consent, the material will be deleted.

To enable this research, Revealing Reality will store all personal data in relation to organising the fieldwork confidentially and securely and this will not be passed to any external agency including Ofcom. To reassure you, we

would like to note that we are registered with the Information Commissioner¹, and are required to maintain secure and protected systems to protect your information.

- Revealing Reality's data protection policies state that personal information from participants is deleted from our systems once it is no longer necessary to use it; and as noted above, your personal information will only be kept by Revealing Reality for as long as Ofcom requires it for the purposes of delivering this research.
- Ofcom will securely store the selection of your video clips and photographs that we pass to it. However, the data will not be stored for longer than is necessary.
- Revealing Reality and Ofcom act in accordance with their respective obligations under data protection legislation. For the purposes of the information we collect as part of this research, Revealing Reality is the data processor and Ofcom is the data controller. Revealing Reality's privacy policies are available on our website <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk> and further information on how Ofcom handles your personal information and your rights, including the right to withdraw your consent for Ofcom to use your personal information, is set out in Ofcom's Privacy Statement, which can be viewed at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement>.

Confidentiality

As noted above, Revealing Reality place high importance on maintaining confidentiality in all relevant aspects of our work. This includes:

- We will not disclose what you as a parent tell us in confidence about your child during the interview (e.g., if you tell us you are worried about how long your child spends online, we will not mention this to your child when we speak to them)
- We will not disclose what your child says to us in confidence to you (e.g., if your child tells us they sometimes spend more time online than they are allowed to, we will not mention this to you when we speak to you), except where there may be safeguarding concerns (see below)
- We will not disclose to external organisations any identifiable data about you or your child, except where there may be safeguarding concerns (see below)

How we will respond to safeguarding concerns

In line with The Children Act (2004), where a child discloses information that gives the researcher reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In these instances, the researcher must inform the Project Manager / Managing Director and follow Revealing Reality's Safeguarding Policy. In these cases a referral must be made to the appropriate authority without delay and in order that the child can be protected if necessary.

How we choose to act and whether it constitutes a safeguarding concern will depend on the severity of the risk of harm, the age of the child, and any additional risk factors. Actions might include:

- Signposting a child to support services (e.g., Childline, Mind, etc.)
- Alerting you as a parent to our concerns
- Alerting third party services (the Local Authorities' Child Safeguarding Board)

If you would like to discuss this in more detail or would like to see our Safeguarding Policy in full, please just ask the researcher and/or Project Manager.

Links

For further information, help, and support, please see:

¹ [Your right to be informed if your personal data is being used | ICO](#)

- Safer internet: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/>
- Net aware: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>
- Childnet: <https://www.childnet.com/>
- Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- ParentZone: <https://parentzone.org.uk/home>
- Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>



Ofcom is the communications regulator in the UK. It regulates the TV, radio and video-on-demand sectors, fixed line telecoms, mobiles, postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. Ofcom ensures that people in the UK get the best from their communications services and are protected from scams and sharp practices, while ensuring that competition can thrive. The Government has decided to appoint Ofcom as the regulator for online harms in the UK. This means Ofcom will take on new responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable people when they are online and give everybody greater confidence to enjoy the huge benefits of being online safely.

If you have any further questions about Ofcom or how it might handle your data, feel free to get in touch with:

Ella Fryer-Smith, Research Consultant

Email: ella.fryersmith@ofcom.org.uk