

Ofcom/ICO - Age Assurance

Annex Two: Focus groups

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Families' Media Use

Sample specification and screener – focus groups

Project overview

We are conducting **8** remote focus groups with parents and young people exploring their attitudes to online platforms and exploring their perceptions around the potential use of different age assurance technologies online.

Overall **4** groups will be with parents, containing 5 participants each. We expect these groups to last no more than 2 hours. **The incentive for parents taking part is £50.**

A further **4** groups will be conducted with young people, recruiting for a lead respondent who is asked to invite a friend to join the group with them. We expect these groups to last around 1 – 1.5 hours. **The incentive for young people taking part is £40.**

The parents and children will not be related. Revealing Reality will have a short phone call with all participants (adults and children) before the group sessions take place.

This document contains separate sample specification tables and screeners for parent and child groups.

Parent Groups

Sample Specification – Parent Groups

Total: 20 Respondents

Recruiting for **4 Focus Groups** with **5** respondents in each:

- **Adults with Children Aged 8-10**
- **Adults with Children Aged 11-12**
- **Adults with Children Aged 13-14**
- **Adults with Children Aged 15-17**

Within Each Group (5 Participants in Each)	
Age	Spread of ages within each group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-30 • 30-40 • 40-50 • 50+
Parent Gender	Aim for 50:50 split, inclusive of diverse gender identities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female
Child Gender	Aim for spread of parents' child gender within each group, inclusive of diverse gender identities
Primary device usage of child	Aim for a spread, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphone (including type / amount of usage) • Desktop/laptop • Gaming console/handheld device • Tablet • Other (record)
Parental Oversight over child's online world <i>To include table for assessing levels of parental oversight</i>	Aim for a spread within each group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-medium oversight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. some guidelines around screentime, some concern or uncertainty around child's online activity • Medium-high oversight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. parenting control apps, set screen time, more confidence in / awareness of what the child is doing online
Online Platforms used by Child(ren)	Record only. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TikTok • Instagram

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapchat • Facebook • Discord • YouTube • Xbox Live • Twitter
Across Groups (20 Participants Altogether)	
Geography	<p>Regional spread across the UK, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 1x from Scotland • Min 1x from Northern Ireland • Min 1x from Wales • Min 8x from England <p>Aim for a spread of location type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Suburban • Urban <p>Maximum 2x from same town / city</p>
SEG	<p>Spread of SEG across groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 4x A/B • Minimum 4x C1/C2 • Minimum 4x D/E
Household set up	<p>Aim for a spread, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parent • Guardians • Two parents • Step-parent • Only child • Multiple children
Ethnicity	<p>Minimum 4x Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x Black background • 2 x Asian background
Shared Devices	<p>To include families where devices are shared by parents and/children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 4 x Shared devices <p>Record which devices are shared</p>
Attitude to authorities/government	<p>Aim for a spread:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of trust in authorities / government

Screener – Parent Groups

Demographic Considerations

We want to include people with a range of different experiences in the research, so would like to know a bit of information about you. You don't have to answer questions if you don't feel comfortable.

1. What is your age?

20-30

31-40

41-50

50 +

Aim for spread of ages across groups and within each group.

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other, please record _____

Aim for 50:50 split of parental gender within each group, inclusive of diverse gender identities

3. Where do you live?

England

Scotland

Wales

Northern Ireland

Aim for spread across groups, min 8x England and min 1x in each of Scotland, Northern Ireland & Wales

4. Which town/city/area do you live in?

Record: _____

Aim for spread across groups, maximum 2x respondents from same city / town / area

5. How would you describe the area where you live?

Urban

Rural

Suburban

Aim for spread across groups

6. Which one of these groups best describes your ethnic group or background?

White – British

White – Irish

Any other white background

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Asian – Indian
- Asian – Pakistani
- Asian – Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
- Black – Caribbean
- Black – African
- Any other Black background
- Chinese
- Any other, please record _____

Across groups min 4x BAME backgrounds including 2x Black background and 2x Asian background

Socioeconomic Considerations

7. How would you describe your current employment situation?

- Part-time employed
- Full-time employed
- Flexible employment/zero-hour
- Recently unemployed
- Unemployed for 3+ months
- Retired
- In education
- Unable to work

N.B. Only ask (7a) if selected 'employed'

7a. What is/are your current job title(s)?

Please record: _____

8. What is your highest level of education?

Please record: _____

9. Which of the following brackets does your average annual household income fall under?

- Under £20,000
- Between £20,000 and £30,000
- Between £30,000 and £40,000

Between £40,000 and £50,000

Between £50,000 and £70,000

Above £70,000

Prefer not to say

For recruiter: SEG Groupings					
	Unemployed	Low-skill e.g. cleaner, labourer, grocery clerk	Semi-skilled e.g waiter, retail assistant, security, driver	Skilled e.g, machinist, engineer, plumber, nurse	Highly-skilled e.g professional, managerial or admin worker
Degree or equivalent	C1	C1	C1	C1	C1/B/A
A-level/Apprenticeship/Equivalent	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1/B/A
GCSE	D	D	C2	C1	C1/B
None	E	E	D	D	C2/C1

Aim for spread across and within groups, min 1x A/B, 1x C1/C2, 1x D/E within each group

Household & Family Considerations

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

10. What is your marital/relationship status?

Married / civil partnership

Co-habiting

Single

Divorced / separated

Widowed

Other (please specify)

11. Who do you live with? (tick all that apply)

No one

With friends

With partner

With children

With step children

With parents

With any other family member (please specify)

With anyone else (please specify)

Screen out if not 'with children' or 'with step children'

12. What is your relationship with the children in your household?

- Parent
- Step-parent
- Foster parent
- Guardian
- Relative (uncle, aunt, sibling), record _____

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

N.B. Only ask Q13 if selected 'Single or Divorced / separated' to Q10:

13. Does your child – or children – split their time between your home and another parent's?

- Yes
- No

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

N.B. Only ask Q14 if answered 'with partner' to Q11:

14. Is your partner the parent of the children you live with?

- Yes, they're the parent of all the children I live with
- They are the parent of some of the children I live with
- They are not the parent of the children I live with

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

15. How many children are there in the household?

Please Specify: _____

16. What is the age and gender of the child/children in your household?

Please specify for all children in the household:

Child 1: age _____ gender _____

Child 2: age _____ gender _____

Child 3: age _____ gender _____

Child 4: age _____ gender _____

Include a spread of child gender within each group

Child Device Use & Oversight Considerations

17. Which of the following types of digital activity does your child / children engage with most often?

- Social media
- (Online) gaming
- Video sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube)
- Search e.g. Google
- Messaging (e.g. WhatsApp)
- Accessing news or educational content
- Other, please specify

Record only

18. Which of the following online platforms does your child/children use or have accounts on?

- TikTok
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- Discord
- YouTube
- Gaming platform (e.g. PSN, Xbox live)
- Twitter
- Other (please record)

Record all platforms. All parents/guardians in group to live with children using at least one of the above

19. How many devices does your child/children own or have access to?

- 1 device
- 2-3 devices
- 4+ devices

Aim for a spread within each group

20. Are any of the above devices shared with parents / guardians?

- Yes
- No

Record which devices: _____

Aim to include min 4x families where devices are shared by parents/guardians and children across groups

21. On average, how much time do your children spend online (including online multi-player gaming) that isn't related to education, per day?

- Low - less than 2 hours

Medium - between 2 and 5 hours

High - more than 5 hours

Record only

22. I'm going to read some pairs of statements. Please select for whether you feel strongly or somewhat strongly for either, or if you feel neutral.

	Feel Strongly	Feel Somewhat Strongly	Neutral	Feel somewhat strongly	Feel strongly	
I am very concerned about my child/children's online safety						I am not very concerned about my child/children's online safety
I worry about what my child/children's is doing online						I don't worry about what my child/children's is doing online
I wouldn't set up parental controls on my child's devices						I would / have set up parental controls on my child's devices
I wouldn't look at what my child posts online						I view my child's social media profiles to check what they post publicly
I don't worry about my child's screentime						I worry about my child's screentime
I worry about my child's online privacy						I don't worry about my child's online privacy

Parental oversight score

	Total scores	Notes
2 points		Maximum score of 12
1 point		Medium-high parental oversight (8 points or more) Low-medium parental oversight (6 points or less)

Aim for spread of oversight (low-medium, medium-high) within each group

23. How much do you trust the government or other public services?

I trust them a lot

I trust them quite a lot

I feel indifferently

I don't trust them much

I don't trust them at all

Aim for spread of attitudes across groups

24. How do you feel about sharing your personal data with organisations online?

I feel very concerned about sharing my data

I feel quite concerned about sharing my data

I don't have an opinion on sharing my data / I don't mind

I am quite happy to sharing my data

I am very happy about sharing my data

Record only

Child Groups

Sample Specification – Child Groups

Child groups to be recruited in friendship pairs: recruiting 12 lead respondents (+12 friends). Quota criteria here reflect the lead respondent.

Recruiting for 4 Focus Group, each containing 3 Lead Respondents and 3 friends:

- **Males (13-14)**
- **Males (16-17)**
- **Females (13-14)**
- **Females (16-17)**

Transgender or non-binary children will join the group to which they identify / are most comfortable joining.

Within Each Group (6 Participants in Each Group: Recruiting 3 Friendship Pairs)	
<p>Parental oversight over child's online activities</p> <p><i>To include table for assessing levels of parental oversight</i></p>	<p>Aim for a spread within each group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-medium oversight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. some guidelines around screentime, some concern or uncertainty around child's online activity • Medium-high oversight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. parenting control apps, set screen time, more confidence in / awareness of what the child is doing online
<p>Child's primary device usage</p>	<p>Aim for a spread:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphone (including type / amount of usage) • Desktop/laptop • Gaming console/handheld device • Tablet • Other (record)
Across groups	
<p>Online Platform Usage</p>	<p>All respondents to use/have used at least one of the following social media platforms, aiming for a spread of <i>platforms used</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TikTok • Instagram • Snapchat • Facebook • Discord • YouTube • Xbox Live

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter <p>and a spread of the <i>number of platforms used per person</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 • 3-4 • 5+
Geography	<p>Regional spread across the UK, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 1x pair from Scotland • Min 1x pair from Northern Ireland • Min 1x pair from Wales • Min 5x pairs from England <p>Aim for a spread of location type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Suburban • Urban <p>Maximum 1x pair from same town / county</p>
Household income / social grade	<p>Spread of SEG across groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 2x pair AB / higher income • Min 2x pair C1/C2 / medium income • Min 2x pair DE / lower income
Household set up	<p>Aim for spread, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two parent households • Single parent households • Children living with step-parents • Children with older siblings • Children with younger siblings • Only children
Ethnicity	<p>Minimum 3x lead children from BAME backgrounds including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 1x Black background • Min 1x Asian background

Screener – Child Groups

Demographic Considerations

We want to include people with a range of different experiences in the research, so would like to know a bit of information about you. You don't have to answer questions if you don't feel comfortable.

I. Where do you live?

England

Scotland

Wales

Northern Ireland

Aim for spread across groups, min 5x pairs from England and min 1x pair in each of Scotland, Northern Ireland & Wales

2. Which town/city/area do you live in?

Record: _____

Aim for spread across groups, maximum 1x pair from same locality

3. How would you describe the area where you live?

Urban

Rural

Suburban

Aim for spread across groups

4. Which one of these groups best describes your child's ethnic group or background?

White – British

White – Irish

Any other white background

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background

Asian – Indian

Asian – Pakistani

Asian – Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background

Black – Caribbean

Black – African

Any other Black background

Chinese

Any other, please record _____

Aim for spread across groups, with lead respondents min 3x BAME backgrounds including 1x Black background and 1x Asian background

Socioeconomic Considerations

5. How would you describe your current employment situation?

Part-time employed

- Full-time employed
- Flexible employment/zero-hour
- Recently unemployed
- Unemployed for 3+ months
- Retired
- In education
- Unable to work

N.B. Only ask (5a) if selected 'employed'

5a. What is/are your current job title(s)?

Please record: _____

6. What is your highest level of education?

Please record: _____

7. Which of the following brackets does your average annual household income fall under?

- Under £20,000
- Between £20,000 and £30,000
- Between £30,000 and £40,000
- Between £40,000 and £50,000
- Between £50,000 and £70,000
- Above £70,000
- Prefer not to say

For recruiter: SEG Groupings					
	Unemployed	Low-skill e.g. cleaner, labourer, grocery clerk	Semi-skilled e.g. waiter, retail assistant, security, driver	Skilled e.g. machinist, engineer, plumber, nurse	Highly-skilled e.g. professional, managerial or admin worker
Degree or equivalent	C1	C1	C1	C1	C1/B/A
A-level/Apprenticeship/Equivalent	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1/B/A
GCSE	D	D	C2	C1	C1/B
None	E	E	D	D	C2/C1

Aim for spread across groups, lead respondent min 2x A/B, 2x C1/C2, 2x D/E within each group

Household & Family Considerations

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

8. What is your marital/relationship status?

- Married / civil partnership
- Co-habiting
- Single
- Divorced / separated
- Widowed
- Other

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

9. Who do you live with? (tick all that apply)

- No one
- With friends
- With partner
- With children
- With step children
- With parents
- With any other family member (please specify)
- With anyone else (please specify)

Screen out if not 'with children' or 'with step children'

N.B. Only ask Q10 if selected 'Single or Divorced / separated' to Q8:

10. Does your child – or children – split their time between your home and another parent's?

- Yes
- No

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

N.B. Only ask Q11 if answered 'with partner' to Q9:

11. Is your partner the parent of the children you live with?

- Yes, they're the parent of all the children I live with
- They are the parent of some of the children I live with
- They are not the parent of the children I live with

Across groups, aim for a spread of household set-ups including single parent, two parents, guardians, step-parents, only child and multiple child households

12. How many children are there in the household?

Please Specify: _____

13. What is the age and gender of the child taking part in the research?

Age _____ Gender _____

Screen out if not 13, 14, 16 or 17

Groupings defined by age and gender: 3x male (13-14), 3x male (16-17), 3x female (13-14), 3x female (16-17)

14. What is your relationship with the child taking part in the research?

Parent

Step-parent

Foster parent

Guardian

Relative (uncle, aunt, sibling) Record _____

Record only

15. What is the age and gender of the other child/children in your household?

Please specify:

Child 1: age _____ gender _____

Child 2: age _____ gender _____

Child 3: age _____ gender _____

Record only

Child Device Use & Oversight Considerations

17. How many devices does the child taking part in the research own or have access to?

1 device

2-3 devices

4+ devices

Record only

16. What devices does your child use most often?

Smartphone

Gaming console

Desktop/laptop

Tablet

Smart speaker (i.e. Alexa, Amazon echo, Google assistant)

Other – please specify

Aim for spread within each group

15. Which of the following types of digital activity does your child engage with most often?

Social media

(Online) gaming

Video sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube)

Search e.g. google

Messaging (e.g. WhatsApp)

Accessing news or educational content

Other, please specify

Record only

17. Which of the following online platforms does the child taking part in the research use or have accounts on? (tick all that apply)

TikTok

Instagram

Snapchat

Facebook

Discord

YouTube

Gaming platform (e.g. PSN, Xbox live)

Twitter

Other (please record _____)

All lead child to use at least one of the above

For recruiter: How many of the above platforms are used?

1-2

3-4

5+

Each group to include a spread of number of platforms used

18. On average, how much time does the child taking part in the research spend online (including online multi-player gaming) that isn't related to education, per day?

Low - less than 2 hours

Medium - between 2 and 5 hours

High - more than 5 hours

Record only

19. I'm going to read some pairs of statements. Please select for whether you feel strongly or somewhat strongly for either, or if you feel neutral.

	Feel Strongly	Feel Somewhat Strongly	Neutral	Feel somewhat strongly	Feel strongly	
I am very concerned about my child/children's online safety						I am not very concerned about my child/children's online safety
I worry about what my child/children is doing online						I don't worry about what my child/children's is doing online
I wouldn't set up parental controls on my child's devices						I would / have set up parental controls on my child's devices
I wouldn't look at what my child posts online						I view my child's social media profiles to check what they post publicly
I don't worry about my child's screentime						I worry about my child's screentime
I worry about my child's online privacy						I don't worry about my child's online privacy

Parental oversight score

	Total scores	Notes
2 points		Maximum score of 12
1 point		Medium-high parental oversight (8 points or more) Low-medium parental oversight (6 points or less)

Aim for spread within each group

Information Sheet – Parent and Guardian focus group

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this project for Ofcom and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)! 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 how people, especially children, are currently using online platforms
- Exploring the attitudes of parents/guardians and children towards the different ways online platforms might use 'age assurance'. Age assurance refers to measures that try to establish the age of an individual when they access particular online services. This is done to ensure that they get an age-appropriate experience online, and in the case of children, to protect them from potential online harms.

We have been commissioned to carry out this research by Ofcom, the communications regulator, and the ICO, the information rights regulator, who protects the UK public's privacy and information rights.

The research will help both Ofcom and the ICO to perform their duties around media safety and data protection.

We will be speaking with children, aged between 13 and 17, and separate parents across the UK.

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 enhanced 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, want to exercise your data protection rights, such as accessing your data or requesting this is deleted or wish to submit a complaint, feel free to get in touch with: [researcher contact details]



Ofcom is the communications regulator in the UK. The Government has appointed Ofcom as the regulator for online harms in the UK, which means Ofcom will work to ensure that online platforms are taking the necessary precautions to protect their users from harm.

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

- Corporation Secretary
- Email: corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk



The ICO is the Information Commissioner's Office, the UK's independent information rights regulator that promotes and enforces various legislation including data protection laws and the Freedom of Information Act.

If you have any further questions about the ICO or how it will handle your data, feel free to get in touch with the ICO's Data Protection Officer, Louise Byers. You can contact her at dpo@ico.org.uk or via our [postal address](#). Please mark the envelope 'Data Protection Officer'.

Purpose of the research and use of data

Ofcom and the ICO have asked for this research to be done:

- To help the ICO and Ofcom carry out their roles as regulators around children's use of online services by exploring attitudes towards online safety and age assurance across a mix of parents/guardians and children
- To gather evidence to inform policymaking by exploring how parents/guardians and children feel about age assurance across different contexts
- To ensure we're speaking to a wide range of people from a range of backgrounds

What will taking part involve?

This research involves attending a remote focus group, held on Zoom. The group will last approximately 2 hours.

Before the group, a researcher will have a brief call with you to confirm your details, explain what will happen in the session and confirm that you're happy to take part.

There will be 5 adults taking part in the group. There will also be two researchers from Revealing Reality at the group who will be leading the session, so you can ask them if you have any questions during the group. There may also be some colleagues from Ofcom and the ICO observing.

In the group, we will discuss topics such as your experiences and perceptions of different online platforms as a parent / guardian and your perceptions of different ways platforms may understand the age of users.

We will need you to have a camera and microphone turned on for the duration of the group. This means that others in the group will be able to see and hear you. You do not have to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable with. You can choose to stop the conversation or activity at any point without giving a reason, without any negative consequences.

You will receive £50 by bank transfer as a thank you for taking part in these activities. Only those who complete participation in the research (attending the full group session) will receive this payment, but you can still withdraw your consent after receiving this if you would like to. If you do withdraw, we won't be able to delete your images and audio from the session recording until the end of the retention period, but your views and information will not be used beyond this point.

How will the research data be used?

Revealing Reality is carrying out this work for Ofcom and the ICO. In brief, this means that we will collect the information Ofcom and the ICO ask us to collect from a set of individuals and for a specific purpose (outlined above).

Revealing Reality's privacy policies are available on our website <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk>

What data will we collect?

Personal data we collect from you during the research may include:

- Information to allow us to contact and visit you: name and contact details. This information will not be shared with Ofcom or the ICO.
- Information to help us understand your life (e.g. demographic information about the household), and information to help us understand your attitudes and opinions about age assurance and your (and your child's) use of online services. This will include written notes and video recordings. This information will be shared with Ofcom and the ICO.

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 our contract with Ofcom and the ICO. Once the contract has ended, we'll

then keep it for a further six months. At the moment, the contract is likely to end in late-August 2022 which means we are likely to keep your data until late-February 2023. Your information will not be kept for longer than necessary.

How will your information be used?

As part of our work for Ofcom and the ICO, Revealing Reality will be handing over information about you, for example in presentations and reports. Any information about you will not include any information that will identify you in any way.

When we pass information onto Ofcom and the ICO, it will be pseudonymised. This means that it won't include anything that would directly identify you, and a false name will be used. However, we will also pass on video, photographs and audio to Ofcom and the ICO that won't be blurred or altered. These may subsequently be shared by Ofcom and the ICO with other people who work at Ofcom and the ICO as part of presentations or meetings. You are welcome to get in touch with [researcher name] to review the photos, video and audio before we send these to Ofcom and the ICO.

When the information is used in reports or other outputs that will be published (i.e. in the public domain), the information will be anonymised. This may include any quotes from you, with a pseudonym, with any identifying information in the quote removed. It won't include anything that would directly identify you, and it won't include any photos, video or audio. To ensure that data is anonymised, we may change some details we include, such as location or occupation.

What happens if you want to withdraw your consent?

Ofcom and the ICO will use the information we provide for the purposes you have consented to, but you may withdraw your consent at any time before the publication of the report – this would mean that the information gets deleted at the earliest opportunity. After publication, we will not be able to delete the data published in the report or the full group recording until the end of the retention period (see above), but we would still be able to delete your contact details and any notes about you. The report will only contain anonymised data, and so will not be in a format where you may be identified.

Confidentiality

As noted above, Revealing Reality places high importance on maintaining confidentiality in all relevant aspects of our work:

- We will not disclose what you as a parent tell us in confidence about your child / family
- We will not disclose to external organisations other than to Ofcom and the ICO any identifiable data about you
- However, please be aware that there will be other members of the public in the same group, who will see your video and hear your contributions during the session. The other people in the group will be from across the UK, and there will be a maximum of one other person from your area in the session.

Annex: additional information

We will be relying on your consent to collect and use your personal data. When we collect information such as about your health, political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or ethnic origin, we also need your explicit consent as this type of information is classed as special category data in data protection law and needs added protection.

What information will we collect?

Information to help us contact you:

- This will include names and contact details. Revealing Reality will receive these details from their recruitment partners, Acumen Field and Research Opinions, who will share these details in secure, password-protected documents. This information will not be shared with Ofcom or the ICO.

Information to help us understand your life:

- This will include your age at the time of recruitment, gender, marital status (parents only), educational attainment, background information (hobbies, employment (parents only), financial attitudes), family life (members of the household and household routines), racial or ethnic origin or sexual orientation.
- Information to help us understand your attitudes, opinions and comments about age assurance, your use of online services, and related social issues.

How will data be stored and used?

- Revealing Reality, Ofcom and the ICO 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 processor and Ofcom and the ICO are joint controllers. To recruit people into the project, Revealing Reality will be using external recruitment partners, Acumen Field and Research Opinions who will be sub-processors.
- This means that Revealing Reality and our sub-processors will only be collecting and using your personal data according to instructions from Ofcom and the ICO which decide why and how your personal data is processed.
- To enable this research, Revealing Reality will store all personal data in relation to organising the fieldwork (such as your names and contact details) confidentially and securely and this will not be passed to any external agency including Ofcom or the ICO. To reassure you, we would like to note that we are registered with the ICO¹, 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 and the ICO require it for the purposes of delivering this research.
- The ICO and Ofcom will have access to pseudonymised data (data where personal identifiers have been removed) from the Connect platform and will be able to save this on their own systems. According to the respective organisations' retention schedules, data saved will be reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and will not be kept for longer than is necessary.

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

- The ICO will retain information from the research according to its [published retention schedule](#) for 6 years before a review. Ofcom will retain information in line with Ofcom retention policies, more information on which can be found [here](#).
- The [pseudonymised](#) information, audio, images and video that we share with Ofcom and the ICO may subsequently be shared by Ofcom and the ICO with other people who work at Ofcom and the ICO as part of presentations or meetings.
- Research findings in the forms of [anonymised](#) reports or outputs may be shared more widely with external stakeholders, such as government departments, and industry bodies, to aid discussion about potential technical solutions for age assurance and future development in this area. This may include any quotes from you or your children, with a pseudonym, with any identifying information in the quote removed. Any videos, images or audio showing your face will not be shared externally by Ofcom and the ICO.

Your data protection rights

You have a number of rights under data protection law:

- **Your right of access**

You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information. This right always applies. There are some exemptions, which means you may not always receive all the information we process. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to rectification**

You have the right to ask us to rectify information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete. This right always applies. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to erasure**

You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information . [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to restriction of processing**

You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your information in certain circumstances. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to data portability**

This only applies to information you have given us. You have the right to ask that we transfer the information you gave us from one organisation to another, or give it to you. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. We have one month to respond to you.

As the ICO and Ofcom will not have access to personal identifiers such as your full names and contact details, Revealing Reality will be handling your information rights requests. Please contact [researcher name] if you wish to do so.

- **Your right to complain**

As the ICO is the data protection regulator, if you are unhappy about the way we have used your/ your child's personal data in this research, you can complain to the ICO. More information is available [here](#).

Privacy policies and key contacts

Revealing Reality is registered with the ICO and is required to maintain secure and protected systems to protect your information.



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. The Government has appointed Ofcom as the regulator for online harms in the UK, which means Ofcom will take on new responsibilities to ensure online platforms are taking the necessary precautions to protect their users from harm.

Ofcom's handling of personal data is overseen by our Corporation Secretary, who is Ofcom's Data Protection Officer. Further information on how Ofcom handles your personal data and respond to your data protection rights is set out in Ofcom's privacy notice. The Ofcom privacy notice can be viewed at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement>.

If you have any further questions about Ofcom, should you wish to query the way Ofcom is handling your personal data or submit a complaint about this, you should address this to our Data Protection Officer at:

- Corporation Secretary
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA
- Email: corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk



The ICO is the Information Commissioner's Office, the UK's independent information rights regulator that promotes and enforces various legislation including data protection and the Freedom of Information Act. They have published a statutory Children's code (aka the Age-Appropriate Design Code or AADC) that articulates 15 standards of age-appropriate design that providers of online services likely-to-be-accessed by children must conform to. Standard 3 of the Code – age-appropriate application – states that platforms need to have a good understanding of the profile of their users, and ensure that services are appropriate to their age, or ensure that standards of the Code are applied to all users.

- Further information on how the ICO handles your personal data and respond to your data protection rights is set out in and the ICO's privacy notice. The ICO privacy notice can be viewed at: [ICO Privacy notice | ICO](#)
- If you have any further questions about the ICO or how it will handle your data, feel free to get in touch with the ICO's Data Protection Officer, Louise Byers. You can contact her at dpo@ico.org.uk or via our [postal address](#). Please mark the envelope 'Data Protection Officer'.
- [You can find more information about the role of the DPO here.](#)

Links

- For further information, help, and support, please see:
- 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/>

Consent form – Parent / guardian focus group

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Ofcom and the ICO’s research project about how people, especially children, use online platforms – and their attitudes towards age assurance methods. This document is to obtain your consent for taking part in the research and should be read alongside the project information sheet which you have been provided.

Throughout your involvement in the project, you will be asked to take part in a remote focus group on Zoom.

By selecting ‘yes’ on this consent form, you agree to take part in this project and are happy for us to include your personal data in the research in the ways outlined in the information sheet.

Please note that each box needs to be consented to individually by selecting ‘yes’ next to the statement.

Thank you for contributing to our research. It’s important to us that we are transparent with you about the process of collecting and using your data.

PARTICIPANT FULL NAME: _____

PLEASE CONFIRM BY DELETING YES/NO IN THE BOXES HIGHLIGHTED BELOW:

YES/NO	<p>I am happy to share information for this research project</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have read and understood the project information sheet and understand the purpose of the research • You have asked all of the questions that you need to at this time, and have had them answered to your satisfaction • You understand you are able to withdraw from the project at any time by informing a member of our research team • You understand that your personal identifiers (such as name and address) will not be revealed to Ofcom, the ICO or any third-parties, and that any information you give will be anonymised or pseudonymised in line with what is set out in the information sheet • You understand that for the purposes of the information we collect as part of this research, in terms of data protection law Revealing Reality is the processor and Ofcom and the ICO are joint controllers. • You would be open to further involvement as the research project progresses, such as our researchers getting in touch if they have any further questions for you.
YES/NO	<p>I am happy for Revealing Reality to access and store my pseudonymised/ anonymised data for insight and research reporting purposes</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you confirm:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand that the pseudonymised/ anonymised data gathered could be used to illustrate the research findings for Ofcom and the ICO in presentations and written reports. • You understand the nature of the personal information that will be collected as part of this research and you agree to its use by Ofcom and the ICO for the purposes explained in the project information sheet. This may include internal and external communication purposes for example, presentations, reports, publications and at conferences. • You give your consent for Ofcom and the ICO to share the anonymised information (which will not include images, video or audio) with selected partners or third parties
<p>YES/NO</p>	<p>I am happy for Revealing Reality to access a recording of the interview for Ofcom and the ICO’s quality assurance purposes</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand that recordings of the interview may be temporarily shared (via Revealing Reality’s online platform Connect) with Ofcom and the ICO to enable them to observe the interview. • We will pseudonymise this as far as possible, but Ofcom and the ICO team will not record or capture personal identifiers such as your real name, if mentioned in the interview)

Signed:

Date:

Ofcom/ICO Age Assurance

Focus group flow

Project objectives

- Explore parents', guardians' and children's attitudes towards online safety and AA measures, including how they perceive the benefits and risks of current and future AA solutions.
- Explore household dynamics around online safety and age assurance – how they engage with AA in different contexts, and how they balance different considerations such as safety, privacy, usability, convenience and social impact across contexts and depending on the technique used.

Focus group objectives

- Further explore how parents / guardians and children balance different considerations (e.g. safety, privacy, usability, convenience and social impact) where age assurance is used by online services
- Further explore perceptions of the proportionality of different age assurance measures in different online situations
- Further explore both personal preferences for age assurance measures and preferences based on broader societal considerations

How this document will be used

This document outlines the flow of the focus group sessions. It illustrates the key sections of the session and the key points to be explored, alongside suggestions for stimulus and activities in the sessions. This document contains the flow of the adult groups, and the activities will be adapted for child groups.

This flow will be developed further with some additional detail and probes for researchers added. There will be an element of flexibility in how the guide is used – the group moderator will probe around areas of interest in line with the project objectives and key areas to explore around age assurance as these are raised in the group discussion.

Adult focus groups

Topic overview:

- Introduction and icebreaker (5 mins)
- Parent and child online activities (10 mins)
- Setting up the need for age assurance (10 mins)
- Introduction to age assurance (15 mins)
- Introduction of age assurance methods (20 mins)
- Detailed feedback on age assurance methods (45 mins)
- Scenario testing (20 mins)
- Wrap up and final reflections (5 minutes)

Section and key points	Suggested stimulus / activities
Introduction & Icebreaker (5 mins)	
<p>Introduce Focus Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher introductions • Overview of consent and data protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can stop the interview any time you want to ○ There's no obligation to answer questions ○ There are no right or wrong answers ○ You can interrupt and ask questions at any point ○ You can withdraw at any time ○ Reference privacy notice for full details e.g. data protection rights • Consent to record <p>Icebreaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us your name, your children's ages • What's your favourite ice cream? 	
Online activities (10 mins)	
<p>Objective for section: <i>in this section, we'll get an understanding of the background contexts for respondents and their relationship with the online world, including the child's online activities and their own, and concerns about what their child does online</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think your <u>children</u> do online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What platforms / applications do they use? • What do you think they get out of doing what they do online? • What are your concerns, if any, about what they do online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you think these things could be prevented? ○ What could be in place to mitigate risks? • What rules / controls do you have around what they do online? • What are your thoughts about sharing information online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What type of information do you think is collected? • What are the main things <u>you</u> do online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How confident do you feel doing things online? 	Icons of platforms / devices

Setting up the need for AA (5-10)	
<p>Objective for section: <i>having captured concerns respondents have about the online world and things their children do online in the previous section, we will set up the need for AA measures and discuss broader online risks. This will introduce questions around how to mitigate online risks, and ground later conversations against a need for AA to avoid debate on its necessity.</i></p> <p>I'm going to give you some information now and see what you think</p> <p><i>Stimulus: tailoring content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you aware of this? What do you think about this? <p><i>Stimulus: Harms examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think these negative experiences could be prevented? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What could be in place to mitigate risks? • Who do you think should be responsible of preventing risks and harms online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Probe:</i> parents, platform, government, users <p><i>Stimulus: The children's code & Online safety bill</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard about these initiatives / laws? What do you think? 	<p>Data and information about the occurrence of online harms</p>

Introduction to age assurance (10-15)	
<p>Objective for section: <i>Before we reveal any information / detail about the age assurance methods, we will gather spontaneous responses about AA more generally to understand respondents' personal opinions and knowledge levels.</i></p> <p><i>We will briefly introduce a range of personas illustrating different types of people, to encourage respondents to think about age assurance at wider levels than their own lives and at societal levels.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard about Age checks or Age assurance? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you think it is? • What methods/ways of doing it do you know of? • Have you ever done an age check online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kind of service / method did you use? ○ What was your experience? ○ Did you think it was proportionate? • What do you think would be good about it? • What do you think would be bad/inconvenient about it? • When do you think it would be more / less important? • What moments when using the internet might you expect it to come up? • How important is it to have age assurance in the following situations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social media ○ Gaming ○ etc • Who do you think age assurance will impact? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think it will impact <u>you</u>, as an adult? <p>Researcher to briefly introduce personas to remind respondents that age assurance would impact everyone, and to consider societal impacts</p>	<p>Definition of age assurance (depending on if they've heard or not about it)</p> <p>Introduction of personas</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A 30-year-old with accessibility needs or learning difficulties 2. An 11-year-old child with risky online behaviours 3. A young-faced 25-year-old 4. An older looking 14-year-old 5. A 17-year-old teenager currently working 6. A 15-year-old child in care 7. A parent of 5 children of different ages (9, 12, 14, 16, 17) 8. A digitally excluded person (limited access or not digitally confident i.e. older person) 	
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Introduction of age assurance methods (15 – 20 mins)	
<p>Objective for section: here we will provide respondents with a brief introduction to the AA methods to gauge spontaneous responses and questions. We'll do two ranking exercises – one to capture their initial personal preferences, and one to capture preferences at a societal level (i.e. what they think would work best for other people) to capture tensions between personal and societal preferences.</p> <p>Initial understanding and questions about methods:</p> <p>Researcher to give an overview of the AA methods, using a 'one-liner' description.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard of these? • Have you had personal experience using them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sorting exercise – ranking from least to most familiar methods • What type of personal information do you think each technique would need to collect? • What questions do you have about the methods? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post in chat exercise – 1 minute to post questions in the chat, researcher to review and pull out common questions 	<p>Overview slide showing all of the AA methods</p>
<p>Personal preferences for AA:</p> <p>I'm going to send you a link to a Google form, and I'd like you to answer some questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private response exercise using Google form: • How important is AA in each of these activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A social media platform ○ Online games ○ Video streaming ○ Private messaging platform (WhatsApp, telegram, signal) ○ Online shopping ○ Pornography ○ Gambling • If you were to choose an age assurance method for you / your family to use, what would be best in each of these activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A social media platform ○ Online games ○ Video streaming ○ Private messaging platform (WhatsApp, telegram, signal) ○ Online shopping ○ Pornography ○ Gambling 	<p>Private response exercise #1 – researcher to share Google form link in chat</p> <p>https://forms.gle/mzNiVFPG9z4DWKQSA</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were to choose an age assurance method for you / your family to use, what would be best for each of these actions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signing up for a new account ○ Downloading an age-restricted game ○ Buying an age-restricted product ○ Viewing an age restricted picture / video <p>Researcher to probe around how respondents make their decision, their considerations, reasoning etc</p>	<p>Overview of personas</p>
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<p>Detailed feedback on individual AA methods (45 mins)</p>	
<p>Objective for section: <i>Explaining each method in detail to capture feedback and nuances around each method. For each, we will ask respondents to reflect on their personal feelings about using the method, as well as for other people. We will also ask around online scenarios in which they'd expect to use the methods.</i></p> <p>Researcher will share additional information on the AA methods, aiming to respond to the key questions raised by respondents earlier in the session. For example:</p> <p>Let's look at each of the methods in more detail. Let's look back at the questions you had for some of the methods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How would you feel about using it? ○ What would your concerns be (if any)? • How effective do you think it'd be? How do you think it would work? • What do you think the child and adult would practically need to do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How long would you expect it to take? • How do you feel about adults having to do this too? • What type of information do you think would need to be collected? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you feel about sharing this data? ○ How do you feel about them storing this data? <p><i>Reintroduce online activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At what moments / places online would you expect to see it? • In what scenarios do you see it being appropriate vs. inappropriate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researcher to probe around: social media, gaming, streaming, online shopping & signing up for an account, accessing a new video etc ○ How often would you prefer to do it? <p><i>Reintroduce personas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who do you think this would work for? Not work for? <p><i>Overall</i></p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, how would you rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effectiveness ○ Effort required ○ Severity of risk with sharing this type of data 	
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AA method preference across different activities (15 mins)	
<p>Objective for section: having asked respondents to consider both personal and societal preferences and covered the AA methods in detail, we will ask them to do a final ranking exercise taking all of the additional information into consideration. This will allow us to understand which concerns and characteristics of the AA methods are most / least important to respondents.</p> <p>Objective for activity: Here, we ask respondents to consider the most appropriate AA method for a range of online contexts, including both explicitly 'harmful' (e.g. pornography) and less harmful (e.g. online shopping) contexts. This will draw out reflections on proportionality and highlight areas respondents feel need the strongest measures.</p> <p>Google form ranking based on online activities</p> <p>Now that we've spoken through the methods in more detail, I'd like you to fill in the Google Form questions again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, what method of AA do you think is best for these types of online activity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A social media platform ▪ Online games ▪ Video streaming ▪ Private messaging platform (WhatsApp, telegram, signal) ▪ Online shopping ▪ Pornography ▪ Gambling • What method is best for these actions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signing up for a new account ▪ Downloading an age-restricted game ▪ Buying an age-restricted product ▪ Viewing an age restricted picture / video <p>Discussion: For each online activity, researcher to probe around reasoning for selection. Researcher to pick out differences / changes from first ranking and discuss reasoning for ranking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What made you change your mind? • Why does X method feel more appropriate for X activity / action? • What about a combination of methods? <p>Societal considerations for AA:</p> <p>Let's go back to the personas I introduced earlier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which do you think is most appropriate for the other personas we've seen above? • Private response exercise using google form: If you were to choose an age assurance method for other people to use, what would be best in each of these activities/ actions? <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What were your considerations when selecting your answers? ○ Did any of your selections change between you and other people? 	<p>Ranking exercise #2 in Google form</p> <p>https://forms.gle/2aX8rATziMJUvkkZA</p> <p>Private response exercise #3 – researcher to send Google form link in chat</p> <p>https://forms.gle/ZwbErNwRqCBJRA7u6</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How would people be affected by the different methods?	
Wrap up & final reflections (5 mins)	
<p>On balance, considering your method preference, the online risks, and how the age check methods would work for other people...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which method would be your preference?• Which is the most important for you out of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ high effectiveness○ low effort○ least amount of data shared• Why?• Consent and thanks	

Information sheet – Young person focus group

Hello!

We would like to talk with you about your experiences when you're online (such as on social media websites, chatting with friends, playing games, and so on). We are carrying out research for organisations called the Office of Communications (Ofcom) and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

With this research, Ofcom and the ICO want to understand what young people and families do online and in their day-to-day lives. This could include experiences you've had on your phone, social media, the TV, your tablet or during gaming.

Who are we?

We work for a company in London who do research to find out more about how the world works and what people think about different things. We're called Revealing Reality.

The people you might meet are called [researcher names] and - they are our researchers. They work on lots of projects talking to young people about different things.

What are we doing?

We would like you to come to an online focus group – a group video call on Zoom– with some other people your age. Everyone in the group will identify as the same gender as you or will have told us that they prefer to be in a group of that gender. Everyone else in the group will be a similar age to you too. We would like you to bring a friend to the group – you can choose who this is! We just ask that they identify as or prefer to be in a group with the same gender as you, and that they're the same age as you.

There will also be two researchers at the group who will be leading the session, so you can ask them if you have any questions during the group. There may also be some other people from Ofcom and the ICO observing.

We'll be video recording the group and we will take some written notes too. We will need you to have your camera and microphone on so we can see and hear you clearly. This means everyone in the group will be able to see you and hear what you say.

In the group, we'll be talking about the different things you like to do online and the platforms that you use. If there are any questions you don't want to answer when we're talking, that's okay. No one will be annoyed or upset if you decide you don't want to answer.

You can tell us what you like and we won't tell your parents or guardians 😊. But, if you tell us something we think an adult needs to be told about you to help you, or because we think there is a danger to you or other people, we might have to tell somebody else to make sure you are protected. If this happens, we'll talk about it with you and this might include telling your parents, or telling someone who protects children for their job (this is called a 'local authority').

What happens after the research?

We will share information from the focus group with Ofcom and ICO, and this might include some things that you say. We may share video clips from the groups with them and notes about some of the things you said (you will be shown in those video clips).

We will always remove your name before sharing and give you a fake name (you're welcome to choose it if you like!).

The information you share with us during this research will be safe and handled with care. After collecting everything (video footage and notes from the group) this material will be used to prepare a written report and

presentation for Ofcom and the ICO. However, we'll remove your personal information such as your name. We, Ofcom and the ICO will use your information only for the things you have said we're allowed to use it for.

The video clips will include your face and voice but won't include your real name or where you live.

Annex: additional information

We will be relying on your consent to collect and use your personal data. When we collect information such as about your health, political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or ethnic origin, we also need your explicit consent as this type of information is classed as special category data in data protection law and needs added protection.

What information will we collect?

Information to help us contact you:

- This will include names and contact details. Revealing Reality will receive these details from their recruitment partners, Acumen Field and Research Opinions, who will share these details in secure, password-protected documents. This information will not be shared with Ofcom or the ICO.

Information to help us understand your life:

- This will include your age at the time of recruitment, gender, marital status (parents only), educational attainment, background information (hobbies, employment (parents only), financial attitudes), family life (members of the household and household routines), racial or ethnic origin or sexual orientation.
- Information to help us understand your attitudes, opinions and comments about age assurance, your use of online services, and related social issues.

How will data be stored and used?

- Revealing Reality, Ofcom and the ICO 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 processor and Ofcom and the ICO are joint controllers. To recruit people into the project, Revealing Reality will be using external recruitment partners, Acumen Field and Research Opinions who will be sub-processors.
- This means that Revealing Reality and our sub-processors will only be collecting and using your personal data according to instructions from Ofcom and the ICO which decide why and how your personal data is processed.
- To enable this research, Revealing Reality will store all personal data in relation to organising the fieldwork (such as your names and contact details) confidentially and securely and this will not be passed to any external agency including Ofcom or the ICO. To reassure you, we would like to note that we are registered with the ICO², 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 and the ICO require it for the purposes of delivering this research.
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² [Your right to be informed if your personal data is being used | ICO](#)

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- The [pseudonymised](#) information, audio, images and video that we share with Ofcom and the ICO may subsequently be shared by Ofcom and the ICO with other people who work at Ofcom and the ICO as part of presentations or meetings.
- Research findings in the forms of [anonymised](#) reports or outputs may be shared more widely with external stakeholders, such as government departments, and industry bodies, to aid discussion about potential technical solutions for age assurance and future development in this area. This may include any quotes from you or your children, with a pseudonym, with any identifying information in the quote removed. Any videos, images or audio showing your face will not be shared externally by Ofcom and the ICO.

Your data protection rights

You have a number of rights under data protection law:

- **Your right of access**

You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information. This right always applies. There are some exemptions, which means you may not always receive all the information we process. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to rectification**

You have the right to ask us to rectify information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete. This right always applies. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to erasure**

You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information . [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to restriction of processing**

You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your information in certain circumstances. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

- **Your right to data portability**

This only applies to information you have given us. You have the right to ask that we transfer the information you gave us from one organisation to another, or give it to you. [You can read more about this right here.](#)

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. We have one month to respond to you.

As the ICO and Ofcom will not have access to personal identifiers such as your full names and contact details, Revealing Reality will be handling your information rights requests. Please contact [researcher contact details] if you wish to do so.

- **Your right to complain**

As the ICO is the data protection regulator, if you are unhappy about the way we have used your/ your child's personal data in this research, you can complain to the ICO. More information is available [here](#).

Privacy policies and key contacts

Revealing Reality is registered with the ICO and is required to maintain secure and protected systems to protect your information.



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. The Government has appointed Ofcom as the regulator for online harms in the UK, which means Ofcom will take on new responsibilities to ensure online platforms are taking the necessary precautions to protect their users from harm.

Ofcom's handling of personal data is overseen by our Corporation Secretary, who is Ofcom's Data Protection Officer. Further information on how Ofcom handles your personal data and respond to your data protection rights is set out in Ofcom's privacy notice. The Ofcom privacy notice can be viewed at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement>.

If you have any further questions about Ofcom, should you wish to query the way Ofcom is handling your personal data or submit a complaint about this, you should address this to our Data Protection Officer at:

- Corporation Secretary
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA
- Email: corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk



The ICO is the Information Commissioner's Office, the UK's independent information rights regulator that promotes and enforces various legislation including data protection and the Freedom of Information Act. They have published a statutory Children's code (aka the Age-Appropriate Design Code or AADC) that articulates 15 standards of age-appropriate design that providers of online services likely-to-be-accessed by children must conform to. Standard 3 of the Code – age-appropriate application – states that platforms need to have a good understanding of the profile of their users, and ensure that services are appropriate to their age, or ensure that standards of the Code are applied to all users.

- Further information on how the ICO handles your personal data and respond to your data protection rights is set out in and the ICO's privacy notice. The ICO privacy notice can be viewed at: [ICO Privacy notice | ICO](#)
- If you have any further questions about the ICO or how it will handle your data, feel free to get in touch with the ICO's Data Protection Officer, Louise Byers. You can contact her at dpo@ico.org.uk or via our [postal address](#). Please mark the envelope 'Data Protection Officer'.
- [You can find more information about the role of the DPO here.](#)

Links

- For further information, help, and support, please see:
- 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/>

Parent support form – Young person focus group

Thank you for agreeing to support your child take part in Ofcom and the ICO's research project about how people, especially children, use online platforms – and their attitudes towards age assurance methods.

This document is to obtain your support for your child taking part in the research and should be read alongside the project information sheet which you have both been provided. Your child will need to complete the 'young person' consent form for themselves to give their consent for taking part; you are not consenting on your child's behalf.

Throughout their involvement in the project, your child will be asked to take part in a remote focus group on Zoom.

By selecting 'yes' on this form, you agree that you support your child to take part in this project and are happy for us to include your personal data in the research in the ways outlined in the information sheet.

Please note that each box needs to be supported individually by selecting 'yes' next to the statement.

Thank you for supporting our research. It's important to us that we are transparent with you about the process of collecting and using your child's data.

PARENT FULL NAME: _____

CHILD FULL NAME: _____

PLEASE CONFIRM BY DELETING YES/NO IN THE BOXES HIGHLIGHTED BELOW:

YES/NO	<p>I have read the information and I am happy to support my child to take part in and share information for this research project</p> <p>By selecting 'yes' on the left you confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have been informed of and understand the requirements for your child taking part in the research • You support your child's decision to take part in the research • You will support your child with the tasks required for taking part if needed • You have asked all of the questions that you need to at the moment, and have had them answered in a way that is to your satisfaction
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Signed:

Date:

Consent form – Young person focus group (young person)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Ofcom and the ICO’s research project about how people, especially children, use online platforms – and their attitudes towards the ways online platforms work out people’s ages. This document is to get your consent for taking part in the research and should be read alongside the project information sheet which you and your parent / guardian have been provided.

Throughout your involvement in the project, you will be asked to take part in a remote focus group on Zoom.

By selecting ‘yes’ on this consent form, you agree to take part in this project and are happy for us to include your personal data in the research in the ways outlined in the information sheet.

Please ask your parent / guardian to read this with you and let the researcher know if you or they have any questions.

Please note that each box needs to be consented to individually by selecting ‘yes’ next to the statement in each box.

Thank you for contributing to our research. It’s important to us that we are clear with you about the process of collecting and using your data.

PARTICIPANT FULL NAME: _____

PLEASE CONFIRM BY DELETING YES/NO IN THE BOXES HIGHLIGHTED BELOW:

YES/NO	<p>I am happy to share information for this research project</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have read and understood the project information sheet and understand what the research is for • You have asked all of the questions that you need to at the moment, and have had them answered in a way that you are happy with • You understand you are able to say you don’t want to take part in the project at any time by telling a member of our research team • You understand that information that might identify you (such as name and address) will not be revealed to Ofcom, the ICO or any third-parties, and that any information you give will be anonymised (removing any information that could identify you) or pseudonymised (given a false name) in line with what is set out in the information sheet • You understand that for the purposes of the information we collect as part of this research, in terms of data protection law Revealing Reality is the processor and Ofcom and the ICO are joint controllers. • You would be open to being involved as the research project progresses, such as our researchers getting in touch if they have any more questions for you.
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<p>YES/NO</p>	<p>I am happy for Revealing Reality to access and store my pseudonymised/ anonymised data for insight and research reporting purposes</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand that the pseudonymised/ anonymised data (using a fake name / with any information that could identify you removed) gathered could be used to show the research findings to Ofcom and the ICO in presentations and written reports. • You understand the types of information about you that will be collected as part of this research and you agree to their use by Ofcom and the ICO for the things explained in the project information sheet. This may include internal and external communication purposes for example, presentations, reports, publications and at conferences. • You are happy for Ofcom and the ICO to share the anonymised information (which will not include images, video or audio) with selected partners or third parties
<p>YES/NO</p>	<p>I am happy for Revealing Reality to access a recording of the interview for Ofcom and the ICO’s quality assurance purposes</p> <p>By selecting ‘yes’ on the left you understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand that recordings of the group may be temporarily shared (via Revealing Reality’s online platform Connect) with Ofcom and the ICO to let them watch the group • We will pseudonymise this as far as possible (using fake names instead of real names), but Ofcom and the ICO team will not record or capture personal identifiers such as your real name, if mentioned in the group)

Signed:

Date:

Ofcom/ICO Age Assurance

Focus group flow – child groups

Project objectives

- Explore parents', guardians' and children's attitudes towards online safety and AA measures, including how they perceive the benefits and risks of current and future AA solutions.
- Explore household dynamics around online safety and age assurance – how they engage with AA in different contexts, and how they balance different considerations such as safety, privacy, usability, convenience and social impact across contexts and depending on the technique used.

Focus group objectives

- Further explore how parents / guardians and children balance different considerations (e.g. effectiveness, effort, data sharing) where age assurance is used by online services
- Further explore perceptions of the proportionality of different age assurance measures in different online situations
- Further explore both personal preferences for age assurance measures and preferences based on broader societal considerations

How this document will be used

This document outlines the flow of the focus group sessions. It illustrates the key sections of the session and the key points to be explored, alongside suggestions for stimulus and activities in the sessions.

There will be an element of flexibility in how the guide is used – the group moderator will probe around areas of interest in line with the project objectives and key areas to explore around age assurance as these are raised in the group discussion.

Child focus groups

Topic overview:

- Introduction and icebreaker (5 mins)
- Child online activities (10 mins)
- Setting up the need for age assurance (5 mins)
- Introduction to age assurance (10 mins)
- Introduction of age assurance methods (5 mins)
- Detailed feedback on age assurance methods (50 mins)
- Wrap up and final reflections (5 minutes)

Section and key points	Suggested stimulus / activities
Introduction & Icebreaker (5 mins)	
<p>Introduce Focus Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher introductions • Overview of consent and data protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can stop the interview any time you want to ○ There's no obligation to answer questions ○ There are no right or wrong answers ○ You can interrupt and ask questions at any point ○ You can withdraw at any time ○ Reference privacy notice for full details e.g. data protection rights • Consent to record <p>Icebreaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us your name, your age • What's your favourite ice cream? 	
Online activities (10 mins)	
<p>Objective for section: <i>in this section, we'll get an understanding of the background contexts for respondents and their relationship with the online world, including the child's online activities, and concerns about online activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What platforms / applications do you use? • What do you get out of doing what you do online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How would you feel if you weren't able to go online? ○ What do you think you might miss out on, if anything? • What things worry you, if anything, when you are online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you think these things could be prevented? • What rules / controls do your parents have around what you do online? 	Icons of platforms / devices
Setting up the need for AA (5 mins)	
<p>Objective for section: <i>having captured concerns respondents have about the online world, we will set up the need for AA measures and discuss broader online risks. This will introduce questions around how to mitigate online risks, and ground later conversations against a need for AA to avoid debate on its necessity.</i></p> <p>I'm going to give you some information now and see what you think</p> <p><i>Stimulus: tailoring content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you aware of this? What do you think about this? <p><i>Stimulus: Harms examples [if participants have not identified potential harms in previous section]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How surprising is this? • How do you think these negative experiences could be prevented? • Who do you think should be responsible of preventing risks and harms online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe: parents, platform, government, users 	Data and information about the occurrence of online harms

Detailed feedback on individual AA methods – for you and others (35 mins + 15 mins for ranking and discussion)

Objective for section: Explaining each method in detail to capture feedback and nuances around each method. For each, we will ask respondents to reflect on their personal feelings about using the method, as well as for other people. We will also ask around online scenarios in which they'd expect to use the methods.

Let's look at each of the methods in more detail.

Activity: Please post any questions you have about this method in the chat

- What do you think of this?
 - How would you feel about using it?
 - What would be good about it?
 - What would be bad about it?
 - What would your concerns be (if any)?

Reintroduce online activities

- At what moments / places online would you expect to see it?
- In what scenarios do you see it being appropriate vs. inappropriate?

Effectiveness ranking

- How effective do you think it'd be? How do you think it would work?
- Hypothetically speaking, if someone wanted to get around this method, how easy would that be?
- Are there any types of people that it wouldn't be effective for?
 - Spontaneous answers and prompting with personas

Effort ranking

- What do you think the young person and adult would practically need to do?
 - How **long** would you expect it to take?
 - How **often** would you expect to have to do it?
 - Are there any situations where you would **give up** trying to do what you wanted if you were asked to do an age check?
 - How do you think your **parents would feel** if they had to help you with this method all the time?
- Are there any types of people who would find this harder to do?
 - Spontaneous answers and prompting with personas
- What would the impact of age checks be for what you like to do online?
 - Would they prevent you from doing anything?

Data ranking

- What type of information do you think would need to be collected?
 - How do you feel about sharing this data?
 - How do you feel about them storing this data?

Online activities

Personas if needed

Google form ranking (10 mins)

Now that we've spoken through the methods in more detail, I'd like you to fill in the Google Form questions again.

<https://forms.gle/4nzJeZ8GdYMdPcZy8>

- Considering everything we've spoken about, including what would work for other people as well as you, what method of AA do you think is best in each of these situations?

Discussion: For each action, researcher to probe around reasoning for selection.

- Why does X method feel more appropriate for X activity / action?
- Has anybody changed their minds since the first ranking? What made you change your mind?
- What about a combination of methods? How useful would that be?
- What would your answer be if you were a different age?
 - What about when you were younger?
 - What about in the future?

Wrap up & final reflections (5 mins)

On balance, considering your method preference, the online risks, and how the age check methods would work for other people...

- Which method would be your preference?
- Which is the most important for you out of:
 - high effectiveness
 - low effort
 - least amount of data shared
- Why?

Consent and thanks