

Readout from April 2026 engagement with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Youth Panel

Summary: Ofcom's Protection of Children team attended a meeting of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Youth Panel on **1 April 2026**. The purpose of the session was to discuss the panel members' opinions on content harmful to children, with a view to informing Ofcom's statutory report on this content. The session was structured in two parts. It began with a presentation delivered by Ofcom staff on content harmful to children, with the opportunity for young people to discuss and ask questions; this was followed by two discussion groups tasked with discussing more in-depth topics relating to these types of content.

Key details: The session was attended by 10 young people, 2 Ofcom members of staff and 3 NICCY representatives.

Note: This summary is organised by category of content harmful to children (Primary Priority Content, Priority Content and Non-Designated Content) rather than the order in which topics were discussed at the session. Please refer to Ofcom's [Children's Register of Risks](#) for an in-depth overview of each type of harmful content. The note concludes with general takeaways from the young people about content harmful to children.

Key takeaways

Pornographic content

- One young person noted that they were recommended more harmful content on user-to-user services when they turned 18. This included a greater prevalence of pornographic content on their recommender feeds:

"At 18 my content changed on my birthday. Suddenly I was seeing hateful and pornographic material." – young person, NICCY Youth Panel engagement session.

Suicide and self-harm content

- The young people noted that algorithms may be reflective of how depressed the user may feel and can become progressively individualised to their personal circumstances.
- It was further noted that adults (particularly those without experience of self-harm) may not understand the terminology being used on user-to-user services to discuss self-harm.
- Hashtags relating to self-harm were discussed.

Abuse and hate content

- The young people mentioned the high prevalence of abuse and hate content on user-to-user services, suggesting that they see it all the time.
- Hateful content against LGBT people was discussed.

Violent content

- The young people mentioned that violent and gory content, including links to fighting, were provided on Instagram and TikTok.
- Self-amputating content was discussed.

Body image content

- The young people discussed unattainable standards, as presented on social media, such as looks, clothes and trends.
- They described how pressure from social media can be depressing.

General comments

- The young people expressed an opinion that adults should not be seeing some types of harmful content either.
- It was suggested that younger children would be more impacted by harmful content than older children.
- A gradual transition in protections for older teenagers was discussed, in order to prevent a cliff-edge in protections for young people who turn 18.
- The young people also discussed the value and benefits of online spaces. For example, they discussed the importance of educational resources and connection to others – particularly for young people living in more remote and rural areas.