



## Agenda

### 15.00-15.30: Arrival & coffee

### 15.30-15.40: Introduction and scene setting

- Marlon Cohen – Associate at Addleshaw Goddard LLP

### 15.40-16.15: Panel 1: How to protect children online?

- Marlon Cohen – Associate at Addleshaw Goddard LLP (Chair)
- Becky Foreman – Microsoft
- Ian Parrett – Smoothwall
- Chris Puttick – TwoTen
- Vicki Shotbolt – The Parent Zone

Questions included

- How effective are the different solutions?
- What can and can't be filtered?
- What are the implications of turning on ISP filters by default?
- Who decides what is blocked and why?

### 16.15-17.00: Panel 2: What does good look like?

- Kelly Fiveash – The Register (Chair)
- Lucinda Fell – Childnet
- Adam Kinsley – Sky
- Dr Ellen Helsper – Lecturer in Media and Communications at London School of Economics and Political Science
- David Miles - Family Online Safety Institute

Questions included

- How do we measure success?
- What should the next steps be?
- What role does digital literacy play in the child protection debate?

### 17.00: Drinks & networking

### Policy background

The issue of online child protection has been a fairly hot issue for quite a while now. The current Government commissioned Reg Bailey, the Chief Executive of the Mothers Union to undertake a Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood. The final report of that review recommended a system of active choice where ISPs but also retailers, manufacturers and others are asked to provide their customers with a choice of whether to turn on filtering tools when they activate or purchase a service/product.

The large consumer facing ISPs started work on implementing active choice (with TalkTalk being the first to offer the service) and also published a code of practice committing them to provide information to parents and offering active choice. The Government was initially supportive of industry but a campaign, led by the Conservative MP Claire Perry (who was subsequently made a Government adviser on this issue) and the Daily Mail put pressure

on the Government who subsequently send mixed messages about what is expected from the industry. This continues to be the case, even though the Department for Education held a consultation on online child safety in 2012. The Government may take up the issue again when they publish their white paper for a new Communications Act later this year (probably July). The big questions in this area are:

### **Opt-in vs Opt-out / default on vs default off**

The question is whether filters should be turned on by default (with consumers opting-in to receive adult content) or whether filters should be turned off by default with consumers being asked whether they want to turn on the filter when they activate their connection for the first time.

### **Network vs device level filtering**

Campaigners would like ISPs to offer network level filtering. TalkTalk offers a network level solution whilst other ISPs are exploring a device level solution where customers will need to install software on their computers and do not necessarily protect all the devices in a household. Other solutions are integrated within routers, i.e they protect all devices in a household but do not require a change to an ISP's network architecture.

### **Content types**

The debate frequently focuses on pornographic content but research indicates that parents and children are often more concerned about issues such as bullying and suicide websites.

Filtering is (not) a sufficiently effective solution.

Whilst all sides of the debate accept that filtering can only be part of a wider solution, there is disagreement as to how important parental guidance and supervision are compared to easily accessible filtering solutions.

### **Age verification**

The issue of age verification has recently been added to the debate. There are two dimensions to this:

1. ISPs may be asked to implement a system that ensures that the person who is setting up the account and makes a decision about whether or not content should be filtered is at least 18 years old. A UKCCIS working group is currently exploring this issue.
2. Campaigners are also talking about a system that would ensure that children cannot access inappropriate webpages by undertaking age verification whilst consumers are surfing the Internet.

### **Public Wi-Fi**

Campaigners have recently focused on this issue and have called on public Wi-Fi providers to filter their publicly available connections by default.

How effective are the different solutions?

Microsoft, Smoothwall and TwoTen offer filtering solutions and it would be interesting to explore what the advantage and disadvantages of the various solutions are. In this context it is also worth highlighting that a lot of companies, e.g. TwoTen offer solutions that approach the issue of online safety from a different perspective than the large ISPs.

Filters can generally protect children from webpages where the content can (relatively) clearly be identified as adult-only. However, they are unlikely to prevent children from bullying each other via social networks or from sharing content directly with each other.

What are the implications of turning on ISP filters by default?

The expectation of campaigners is that ISP filtering will make the Internet a safer environment for children. This is likely to be the case but it can also be argued that this reduces the incentive for parents to supervise their children when they go online or to install additional filtering mechanisms.

Who decides what is blocked and why?

This is a tricky issues as many people within the industry do not want to talk about the ways and mechanisms that are used to add content to a blocking list. However, it may be useful to briefly touch upon this issue and to explore whether it would become more relevant if the Government mandated the use of filtering.

### **Location**

[Addleshaw Goddard, 60 Chiswell Street London, EC1Y 4AG](#)