

March 2019

## **1. Underage access to porn online is UK parents biggest fear**

Three quarters (75%) of parents worry about their children accessing inappropriate adult content online such as violent porn, according to new research

The study of 1,500 parents by AgeChecked, found that websites containing pornographic material were the biggest concern for children's safety and wellbeing.

This was ahead of gambling platforms (51%) and shopping sites that sell restricted items such as knives and alcohol (40%).

The worrying impact of adult content on young people's mental health was recently highlighted in a report by the NSPCC. The charity cited widespread confusion over what constitutes "normal" intimate activity as a cause for increasing peer sexual abuse.

The UK government intends to implement AgeID on all porn websites – a measure met with a mixed reaction.

However, despite this clear need to safeguard minors against viewing inappropriate content online, fewer than half (43%) of the parents surveyed believe that current age restrictions in place are working effectively.

Better online age checks form a key part of the Digital Economy Act, which will require the adult industry to check the age of all online users when it is implemented in April 2019.

This is in addition to growing pressure on social media platforms to better regulate their content. The research found that 59% of children have used social media by the age of 10, even though many of these have a minimum age requirement of 14.

Currently, the adult industry is able to promote explicit content via certain social platforms that are easily accessible by children. However, there is nothing within new Digital Economy Act regulations to stop sites from continuing to advertise their services in this way.

Alastair Graham, CEO of AgeChecked, said:

“Pressure is mounting for adult content providers to ensure they are operating entirely within the law. Although parents have a responsibility to protect their children, it's almost impossible to constantly monitor exactly what they are doing online.

“The onus is therefore also on the adult industry to help safeguard young people – who can be too-easily warped by what they see on the Internet.”

**Link:** <https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/underage-access-to-porn/61912/>

**For more information about e safety :**

- go to <http://www.blackpoolaspireacademy.co.uk>
- come into school and talk to a member of Student Services

# E safety Update



## **2. YouTube's child viewers may struggle to recognise adverts in videos from 'virtual play dates'** **March 2019**

YouTube's highest earning star in 2018 was a seven-year-old boy named Ryan. That's right – a child out-earned the likes of the infamous Logan Paul, video game vlogger PewDiePie, and even make-up mogul Jeffree Star. Between June 2017 and June 2018, Ryan is estimated to have earned an impressive US\$22m from the platform.

Guided by his parents, Ryan presents his own YouTube channel, Ryan ToysReview, where he unboxes and plays with the latest toys. Since joining YouTube in 2015, Ryan has amassed more than 18.5m subscribers, the majority of whom are, unsurprisingly, children. Discussing the appeal, Ryan's mother explained that viewers feel like they're "on a play date with him and going on fun, pretend play adventures".

As child vloggers have risen in fame and fortune, more and more content has been targeted at young viewers, and in 2015 YouTube released a specific children's platform. However, little consideration has been given to the impact of these kinds of videos on child fans, and in particular how they perceive the embedded advertising often included in them.

Ryan's channel has become a lucrative business, complete with 25 employees, including video editors, writers and production assistants. It achieved initial commercial success by allowing more traditional "pre-roll" adverts to appear before its videos, which mostly saw Ryan playing with toys – which his parents say they buy. The channel later began to embed advertising content for major brands, such as Walmart, within Ryan's own videos. More recently, the business launched a range of Ryan's World toys that often feature in his video content.

Ryan's videos do include what seem like clear, child-friendly disclosures surrounding sponsored content. But the question is whether children actually recognise these disclosures and understand what advertising is, and whether all YouTube videos aimed at children adequately disclose marketing messages.

Research shows that children have lower advertising literacy than adult viewers. They struggle to recognise adverts when they are embedded in organic content, and may not recognise YouTube videos featuring paid advertising content, vloggers' own-brand merchandise, or free products "gifted" by brands as marketing.

Children are particularly likely to struggle to identify advertising messages by their favourite vloggers. Viewers often come to feel personal attachments to YouTube stars. Fans of beauty vlogger Zoella, for instance, see her as a sister or best friend, and my own research has found that fans often defend and excuse vlogger actions that might otherwise be seen as problematic or unethical as a result of this relationship. Based on this, we can reasonably predict that children may be more likely to perceive their favourite YouTube star as a friend or play date, as opposed to a celebrity endorser or marketer..

**Link: <https://theconversation.com/youtubes-child-viewers-may-struggle-to-recognise-adverts-in-videos-from-virtual-play-dates-113969>**