



**Comisiynydd Plant Cymru**  
Children's Commissioner for **Wales**

## **Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response**

Date / Dyddiad: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Subject / Pwnc: Protecting children from harms online

Background information about the Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales' principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children. In exercising their functions, the Commissioner must have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Commissioner's remit covers all areas of the devolved powers of the Senedd that affect children's rights and welfare.

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18. The Welsh Government has adopted the UNCRC as the basis of all policy making for children and young people and the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on Welsh Ministers, in exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC.

This response is not confidential.

I am pleased to respond to this consultation on protecting children online. I wish to submit to the consultation process the findings of a survey of 8,840 children and young people in Wales undertaken in autumn 2022<sup>1</sup>; and findings from a recent engagement exercise this office undertook with 1,284 children and young people in Wales, on some of the themes set out by the draft codes.

I am pleased to see that Ofcom engaged with over 15,000 children and young people to inform this consultation and will now be consulting directly with children again in relation to the new draft Codes. We welcome the publication on the Ofcom website of the methodology for consulting with children and young people.

### ***Ambitions for Wales survey – November 2022***

Of the 5,749 children aged 7-11 who responded to the survey, 65% said spending time online was an activity they associated with being happy. However, it is notable that boys more frequently (74.2%) identify spending time online as an activity that makes them happy compared to girls (56.5%).

Only 34.6% of 7–11-year-olds, though, said they ‘always’ feel safe online, with 14.45% saying they never feel safe online.

Of the 2,259 12–18-year-olds who responded, 45% said that spending time online ‘always’ made them happy, with 44% answering that it made them happy ‘a lot of the time’.

Parents / carers responding to my survey were clearly concerned about their children’s safety online, with around 35% of parents saying that they worry always or a lot about the children in their care being safe online.

### ***‘Monthly Matters’ Survey – June 2024***

We heard from 1,284 children and young people aged 7-18 from across 16 local authority areas, and 40 teachers or youth workers, in June 2024, through an online survey,

We asked children and young people whether they feel safe and happy using apps, games or websites online. 76% told us they did, 19% said they sometimes did. 2% said no.

When asked which apps / games / websites made them feel unsafe or unhappy, a quarter (25%) of children listing the apps that made them feel unsafe or unhappy mentioned Roblox, followed by YouTube (15%).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AmbitionsforWales\\_FINAL\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AmbitionsforWales_FINAL_ENG.pdf)

Only 32% of children and young people who'd reported concerns (39% of the total) to an online platform felt their concerns had been taken seriously. 39% said they weren't sure whether the app/website/game took the concern seriously, while 29% said they did not feel their concerns had been taken seriously. It is vitally important that children and young people are given feedback when they report concerns, as far as possible. This will embolden them to report further concerning content and to feel they are being protected.

When asked what they would do if something online made them feel worried, upset, or unsafe, 71% said they would tell a parent/ carer; 39% someone else in their family; 32% would tell a teacher or youth worker. 48% would report it on the app/website. 9% would do nothing. Only 28% of children said they talk a lot to their family about what they do online.

Children as young as 8 shared concerns about 'toxic and rude' users, 'aggressive behaviour', the ability to have conversations with strangers, being 'scammed' and experiences of racial discrimination.

We had some specific comments about the app Roblox. We wanted to share this specific quote:

*When using roblox the report menu doesn't have enough options and sometimes you have to click the wrong reason when reporting something, and if you report for the wrong reason you can be reported yourself.*

I wished to also share a comment from a teacher which reflects the views of several adults responding to our survey:

*I am concerned that adults are always one step behind when talking online ... I feel we don't have enough knowledge as adults to ensure we can protect our children. I was also concerned to the amount of 10-13 year olds that are on apps that are clearly stated for over 13s. The option to just tick a box is not enough to confirm age. Pupils stated they used snap chat, WhatsApp etc. In addition although I have recorded here the true responses that were given through pupils, I sense that there were groups again of that 10-13 age that may not be as confident to recognise red flags and know to report. I sense that although they understood how to report, they did not 100 percent recognise when to report. My concern continues around online bullying and how group chats are having a major impact on friendships and school. Pupils are being "blocked" or "not added" to certain groups, and these groups then become a way to say unkind things about the other person.*

We will be publishing the findings from this survey later this month.

Online safety is a key concern to children, young people, parents / carers and professionals. I welcome the actions taken by Ofcom to implement the Act through these codes and hope that feedback from children and young people themselves will play a key part in shaping these draft codes.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rocio Cifuentes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Rocio Cifuentes MBE  
Children's Commissioner for Wales