

Your response

Question	Your response
Do you have any comments on our proposals?	Clean up the Internet is a UK-based not-for-profit, concerned about the degradation in online discourse and its implications for democracy. We are in favour of government and tech industry action, to increase civility and respect online, and to reduce online bullying, trolling, intimidation, and misinformation. We have conducted research into the role which anonymity, pseudonymity, and unverified identity play in abuse and disinformation on social media. We have developed proposals for how the misuse of anonymity could be restricted, whilst safeguarding the positive uses of anonymity online. We outlined these proposals in our submission to the Online Harms Consultation, which is available here: https://www.cleanuptheinternet.org.uk/post/online-harms-white-paper-response We are in strong agreement with your intention to prioritise "engagement with Government and stakeholders in industry, academia and the third sector around plans for the regulation of online harms". As an experienced sectoral regulator, Ofcom has a vital contribution to make to the development of policy in this area. We would encourage you to include within your contributions to the development of policy in this area: • Consideration of the role which social media platforms play in the public sphere and as fora for political debate, and what responsibilities this means they should be held to in terms of designing inclusive, healthy democratic spaces. • Consideration of the role which design choices made by social media platforms play in problems with discourse such as incivility, abuse, and disinformation, and what role regulation could play in requiring social media companies to improve their design. We would suggest that this should

include consideration of the issue of anonymity and the lack of robust identity verification options for users, given that these issues contribute to the prevalence of both online abuse and misinformation.

Whilst we support your plans for your "Making sense of Media" programme to "enable [users] to protect themselves" we would urge you to recognise that the burden of protection from online harms should not fall exclusively on end users. We believe Ofcom has a crucial role to play in developing a regulatory framework in which tech companies also take their share of responsibility for protecting their users, for example through the introduction of a general Duty of Care.