

# Children's Media Lives

## Project Information sheet

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in this project for Ofcom!** This sheet will provide you with information about the project and your involvement. If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our researchers.

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### About the project

This project is about understanding the ways in which children and young people use a range of media (going online, watching TV, gaming etc.) and how they use technology in the context of everyday life.

We will be asking your child broadly about their use of technology, and, for those who have taken part in previous waves, how this has changed since the last interview. For example, we would like to know what they've been doing online, what they've been watching and their experiences of online learning. We are also interested in how children feel about the different risks associated with using the Internet and things that may concern them.

These questions will be open and non-pressurising: we will not be having conversations about any concern that is not raised by the child themselves. We will not be showing them any inappropriate imagery.

In brief, we have been commissioned to carry out this research by Ofcom, the communications regulator, and we're speaking with 21 children (and their parents) across the UK.

The Communications Act 2003 and Online Safety Act 2023 places a responsibility on Ofcom to promote, and to carry out research into, media literacy and this research contributes to Ofcom's work in this area.

The research will result in a slide pack of key findings illustrative video clips (montages) and a report, which may be used by Ofcom when presenting the research to internal and external parties, or in written Ofcom reports and publications published on Ofcom's website.

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### Who are we?

Revealing Reality is a research company based in London. We specialise in spending extended periods of time with people to understand what life is really like. All our researchers have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") checks<sup>1</sup> and have done a lot of work with children and young people.

If you have any further questions about the research, feel free to get in touch with:

Chiara Sanchez, Senior Researcher

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### What will happen?

This research has three phases:

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<sup>1</sup> DBS checks (formerly known as CRB checks) are checks carried out by the UK Government's Disclosure and Barring Service to help employers make safer recruitment decisions and to maintain the adults' and children's Barred Lists and makes considered decisions as to whether an individual should be included on one or both of these lists and barred from engaging in regulated activity.

## **1. Initial Interview**

A Revealing Reality researcher will talk to you and your child on a video call or in-person for about 2 hours. With your consent, we will record this interview. We will also take notes during the interview, to capture answers more fully.

We will ask your child how their life has changed since their last involvement in the research, and what is new in terms of their media behaviours. As noted earlier, this could include what they are doing on social media, what they are watching, or how they are engaging with education at the moment.

We will also ask your child to take some photos for us to show us some more information about their media use or showing us how they use technology. This may include screenshots of your child's phone screen if they choose to share this with us.

## **2. Tracking Tasks**

After the initial interview, we will ask your child to share some information about their media activity over a two-week period. Having these additional insights into what participants might be posting beyond what is shared in the interviews can help to build up a richer data set and potentially a more nuanced set of findings about the child's media behaviour.

This will include a diary task – where children will be able to share how media fits into their daily routines, using both written reflections and screenshots of your child's phone screen if they choose to share this.

We will also ask your child to share 'screen record' clips (of around 5 minutes), where they record examples of typical media activity on their phone or tablet. Your child will only be asked to share what they are comfortable with researchers seeing and given guidance on the kind of things to avoid (e.g. security information).

Finally, we'll ask you to consent to having a researcher observe your child's activities on social media for a 2-week period, to further help us understand what they do online – we term this 'social media tracking'. Researchers will only follow accounts - from our company account - that they have permission to follow and will not interact with your child at any point (e.g. commenting or liking). After this 2-week period, researchers will stop following your child's accounts.

As noted earlier, the information we collect will be used to prepare a slide deck, report and video clips. This material will include footage of your child, screenshots and photos, but these will not include the name of your child (we will use a fake name) or their friends, any account names or other contact information, or any personal information.

## **3. Follow-up Interview (for children who have participated in previous waves of this study)**

A Revealing Reality researcher will talk to you and your child again on a video call for about 1 hour. With your consent, we will record this interview. We will also take notes during the interview, to capture answers more fully.

Researchers will ask your child to reflect on data gathered during the tracking tasks and may ask some additional questions not covered in the initial interview.

Again, we will also ask your child to take some photos for us to show us some more information about their media use or showing us how they use technology. This may include screenshots of your child's phone screen if they choose to share this with us.

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## **How will the research data (information, worksheets, screen record, videos and photos) be used?**

Revealing Reality is carrying out this work for Ofcom. In brief, this means that we will collect the information Ofcom asks us to collect from a set of individuals and for a specific purpose. We will not share the information with third parties or use it for non-specified purposes. Ofcom will use the information we provide for

purposes you have consented to, but you may withdraw your consent at any time throughout the course of the research, up until the point of publication of the report – this would mean that the information gets deleted. Please note, once it is published, it will not be possible to remove information provided by the participants, which may include verbatim quotes from the report. However, this information will be anonymised.

As part of this research, we will gather and process video footage, screen record footage, audio recordings, photographs, screenshots and social media tracking data on Ofcom's behalf. As this research forms part of Ofcom's wider research into young people's online usage and habits, we will need to keep the information we collect, including the full video footage, so that we can revisit the material if Ofcom asks us to do so. For instance, Ofcom might ask us in the future to prepare a video clip to show how online habits have changed over the years.

Your information will be kept secure, password protected and handled with care. Revealing Reality will keep your information for the duration of the contract with Ofcom, so we can keep it for ten years or more. Upon termination or expiry of the contract with Ofcom, the information will be destroyed or deleted upon request from Ofcom. In any case, your information will not be kept for longer than necessary.

We will use the information collected to prepare a slide pack with key findings, a report of these findings and video clips on children's media use. These slide packs and video clips may be used by Ofcom in its internal and external communication about children's media use (i.e. the material can be used in presentations (face-to-face or virtually) both here in the UK and abroad, or in a report they write and publish on their website). Again, your child's name and other contact details will be removed.

To emphasise, the key points you need to know about you and your child's photographs, audio recordings, screen record and video recordings are:

- As part of our delivery of this research to Ofcom, Revealing Reality will be handing over information about you and your child including demographic data (such as age and area of the country you are from), but not your names, address or contact information.
- The delivery will include stories and information, such as your child's answers to questions, video clips, audio recordings, screen record clips and photos you and your child have shared with us – these materials will be included in the slide pack, report and video montages we deliver to Ofcom.
  - Internal presentations at Ofcom may include quotations, screen records, audio and video recordings you and your child. This may include you and your child's face, with your consent, but will be anonymised.
  - The published report may include quotations from you and your child, summaries of our conversation and anonymised screenshots from either the interview or their diary tasks.
- When analysing data from the project, we will be using an AI-based platform for qualitative analysis called CoLoop. This means all audio will be uploaded to and processed by CoLoop.
- CoLoop (Genie Tech Ltd) are based in the USA, outside of the UK/EU. CoLoop processes and stores all the raw data from interviews in the UK. However, they process the transcripts in the USA, in a GDPR compliant manner. The UK GDPR is a comprehensive data protection law, which is designed to protect the personal data and privacy of individuals in the UK. It outlines a number of principles, obligations and rights that organisations are required to adhere to when they collect and process your personal data.
- All data processed by CoLoop will be stored securely and processed in a way that ensures its confidentiality and integrity. When we have finished the reporting for this year / wave of the project, we will instruct the provider of the CoLoop AI co-pilot software to delete all the personal data associated with this project.
- You can read more about how CoLoop handles your personal data here:  
<https://docs.coloop.ai/docs/category/privacy--security>.
- Any information about you and your child, including any screen record or footage or photographs that are passed to Ofcom as part of a delivery of research findings will be shared using pseudonyms, and will not include any account names or other contact information.
- With your consent, the short video clips we prepare using the video recording of you and your child, and any photographs, audio recordings, screen record clips and screenshots you and your child may share with us, may subsequently be shared by Ofcom as part of presentations given by the Ofcom

team to other people working for Ofcom and other professionals interested in children's media use, including professionals from government, academia, research agencies, the voluntary sector and industry. These Ofcom presentations might be delivered in person (i.e. face-to face with the audience) or by virtual means (i.e. the presentation is delivered online). These presentations may be delivered to stakeholders both here in the UK and abroad (e.g. at a conference). In these instances, Ofcom will handle the material with care, explicitly asking the audience not to film the video clips, though the latter might be difficult to implement in a virtual setting. However, when showing the video clips, Ofcom will seek to restrict the audience's ability to record the session. That said, there is a risk that your photographs and film clips may appear in the public domain. We want to ensure you understand this before you decide whether or not to give your consent.

- You are welcome to get in touch with Chiara (contact details provided) to review the photos and video clips before we send these to Ofcom. You can withdraw your consent for future use of some/all of your photographs and video clips at any time, including after you have reviewed them. If you withdraw your consent, the material will be deleted. Otherwise, we will assume you are happy for these photographs and video clips to be shared.
- The research is entirely voluntary – if at any stage you feel uncomfortable, please do tell the researcher that you think the session should end. You can also withdraw consent for future use of your photographs and video clips at any time during or after the session.
- To enable this research, Revealing Reality will store all personal data in relation to organising the fieldwork confidentially and securely and this will not be passed to any external agency. The purpose of storing this data is to enable us to contact you again to ascertain your interest in participating in this research project in future years. To reassure you, we would like to note that we are registered with the Information Commissioner and are required to maintain secure and protected systems to protect your information.
- Revealing Reality's data protection policies state that personal information from participants is deleted from our systems once it is no longer necessary to use it; and as noted above, your personal information will only be kept for as long as Ofcom requires it for the purposes of delivering this research.
- Ofcom will store the selection of your video clips and photographs that we pass to it securely. As this is a longitudinal study, Ofcom may store the data it receives for 10 years or more. However, the data will not be stored for longer than is necessary.
- Revealing Reality and Ofcom act in accordance with their respective obligations under data protection legislation. For the purposes of the information, we collect as part of this research, Revealing Reality is the data processor, and Ofcom is the data controller. Revealing Reality's privacy policies are available on our website <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk> and further information on how Ofcom handles your personal information and your rights, including the right to withdraw your consent for Ofcom to use your personal information, is set out in Ofcom's Privacy Statement, which can be viewed at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement>.

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## How will we respond to safeguarding concerns?

In line with The Children Act (2004), where a child discloses information that gives the researcher reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In these instances, the researcher must inform the Project Manager / Managing Director and follow Revealing Reality's Safeguarding Policy. In these cases, a referral must be made to the appropriate authority without delay and in order that the child can be protected if necessary.

How we choose to act and whether it constitutes a safeguarding concern will depend on the severity of the risk of harm, the age of the child, and any additional risk factors. Actions might include:

- Signposting a child to support services (e.g., Childline, Mind, etc.)
- Alerting you as a parent to our concerns
- Alerting third party services (the Local Authorities' Child Safeguarding Board)

If you would like to discuss this in more detail or would like to see our Safeguarding Policy in full, please just ask the researcher and/or Project Manager.

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## Links

Ofcom is the regulator for communications services in the UK. They make sure people get the best from their broadband, home phone and mobile services, as well as keeping an eye on TV and radio. They also oversee the universal postal service and the airwaves used by wireless devices. They also help make online services safer for the people who use them, by making sure companies have effective systems in place to protect users from harm. They also help to make sure people don't get scammed and are protected from bad practices. Their duties come from Parliament. They also help to make sure people across the UK are satisfied with what they see and hear on TV and radio, and that programmes reflect the audiences they serve. They are independent, and funded by fees paid to them, by the companies they regulate.

If you have any further questions about Ofcom or how it might handle your data, feel free to get in touch with:

Evie Owen, Senior Research Manager

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