

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Children's Online Safety

Discussion on AI & Online Safety

Monday 3 November 2025, 13:15-14:30, Room R, Portcullis House (PCH)

Members and Parliamentarians:

Joani Reid MP (APPG Chair), Graham Stuart MP (EGM Chair), Monica Harding MP (Officer), Lord Russell (Officer), Baroness Berger, Baroness Grey-Thompson, Baroness Healy, Damian Hinds MP, Jess Asato MP, Joe Robertson MP, Laura Kyrke-Smith MP, Natasha Irons MP, and Paul Foster MP.

Secretariat:

Bobbie Dennis, Hannah Swirsky (Internet Watch Foundation)

Also in attendance:

Calum Fisher (Office of Gregor Poynton MP), Lucy Lee (Office of Damian Hinds MP), Sofia Havsteen-Franklin (Office of Baroness Boycott), Charlotte Aynsley (FOSI), Chloe Setter (Google), Elle Davies (Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO)), Leo (NSPCC Youth Ambassador), Lorna Woods (University of Essex, Online Safety Act Network), Rani Govender (NSPCC), Sara Elnusairi (Google), Stephen Balkam (FOSI), Tiffany (NSPCC Youth Ambassador) and Arthur Virgo (Digital Policy Alliance).

Part 1: EGM

1. Welcome

- 1.1. The secretariat welcomed attendees to the APPG on Children's Online Safety and invited Graham Stuart MP to commence and Chair the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

2. Check Quorate

- 2.1. The Chair confirmed the Group was Quorate, as 8 parliamentarians were present (Joani Reid MP, Lord Russell, Baroness Grey-Thompson, Baroness Healy, Damian Hinds MP, Joe Robertson MP, Natasha Irons MP, and Paul Foster MP)

3. Election of Chair

- 3.1. Natasha Irons MP nominated Joani Reid MP as Chair. The Group unanimously elected Joani Reid MP as Chair.

4. Elected Chair introduction and wrap up

- 4.1. The Chair confirmed the Group had successfully satisfied the conditions of the EGM and passed over the newly elected Chair, Joani Reid MP.

Part 2: Main Meeting

1. Welcome, introductions and minutes

- 1.1. Joani Reid opened the meeting, welcoming attendees to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Online Safety. She shared she was delighted to be elected Chair and wanted to continue the work of former Chair Gregor Poynton MP.
- 1.2. Children's Online Safety is an important issue that cuts across the political spectrum and comes up regularly with constituents. The Chair expressed it is an issue where the Government has to do more and noted the forthcoming opportunities and the need for regulatory progress.
- 1.3. The Chair invited introductions from attendees.
- 1.4. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

2. Summary of the inquiry into AI & Online Safety

- 2.1. The Secretariat explained the state of play for the Group. Before Summer Recess 2025, the APPG met to discuss an inquiry topic for the Group to consider. It was agreed that the focus of the inquiry would be AI & Children's Online Safety, with a focus on the follow key themes:
 - *The current and emerging risks AI poses to children online*
 - *AI models, Moderation, and Automated Decision-Making*
 - *Young people and their experiences of AI*
 - *AI Regulation and recommendations*
- 2.2. The meeting marked the beginning of the Group's discussions on AI, to set the scene for the APPG's inquiry.
- 2.3. The Secretariat confirmed it would circulate the Terms of Reference for the inquiry following the meeting.

3. Opening Statements and Discussion

Theme one: The current and emerging risks AI poses to children online

- 3.1. Elle Davies (CCO) opened the discussion by discussing the current and emerging risks AI poses to children online. She highlighted the growing influence of AI across children's lives, noting that safety considerations often come as an afterthought.
- 3.2. She explained that the Commissioner's current work focuses on mapping both known and emerging risks to children, but limited data access makes proactive responses difficult. AI, she said, tends to amplify existing online harms rather than create new ones, with some AI tools already causing significant harm, including those identified by the IWF.
- 3.3. Elle also mentioned research into harms affecting women and girls and warned about the rapidly expanding market for high-risk AI tools. She noted that children often

understand AI better than their parents but feel responsible for their online experiences with little support. Finally, she stressed the lack of long-term research on AI's impact on children and cautioned against repeating the reactive approach seen with social media.

- 3.4. Lord Russell reaffirmed the issue of insufficient data, noting Baroness Cass was seeking to tackle this issue in the context of clinical data. Waiting for longitudinal studies is too late.
- 3.5. Jess Asato MP raised concerns about how AI is being introduced into schools and health settings, noting that schools often adopt new tools wholesale without fully understanding the risks. She questioned how children are encountering AI and warned that society may be “sleepwalking” into potential harms. The CCO responded that their research has not yet focused on school-specific content but highlighted issues such as iPads and cameras in classrooms and the lack of clear policies or guidance for schools. They noted that while children express concern about online safety and misogyny, school leaders feel uncertain about how to manage AI use, particularly with the recent rollout of RSHE materials and the rapid growth of the edtech sector.
- 3.6. Damian Hinds MP emphasised the need for a proactive approach to AI risks for children, stating that clear harms shouldn't require long-term proof before action, similar to safety standards for toys. He noted that AI is already widely used in schools and that data from these settings could inform understanding of its impact. He asked if the CCO had conducted research into the use of AI for homework.
- 3.7. Baroness Berger explained she had tabled a topical question on recent data, [revealing over one million people speak to ChatGPT about suicide every week](#), noting this was her chief concern about AI.

Theme 2: AI models, Moderation, and Automated Decision-Making

- 3.8. Chloe Setter (Google) outlined Google's approach to AI and child safety, emphasising that AI is not a single, uniform technology. The company aims to ensure all AI experiences for young people are high-quality, privacy-protected, and age-appropriate, drawing on decades of experience designing products for children. Safety is embedded from onboarding, with safeguards and transparency features that cannot be turned off.
- 3.9. Google described a balance between addressing harms and promoting benefits, highlighting continuous safety testing, including “red teaming”, and engagement with young people. A recent report showed positive learning outcomes: two-thirds of young people used AI for creative tasks, and 81% said it improved their creativity and helped them understand difficult topics. Many use AI for translation, editing, and learning, though schools and parents want more support to guide responsible use.
- 3.10. Chloe discussed Google's long-standing educational focus, through tools like Gemini and YouTube, to support guided learning and critical thinking rather than providing direct answers. Since 2015, Google has promoted digital literacy in schools, including the Be Internet Legends programme (reaching 85% of UK schools) and new

initiatives with DeepMind and Raspberry PI to teach AI safety and real-world applications.

- 3.11. Protections for under-18s are built in by design, preventing exposure to harmful or distressing content. Models are trained to detect risk signals and surface support resources. Gemini is deliberately designed not to present as human or relational, and parental controls allow families to manage access.
- 3.12. On child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), Google continues its long-standing collaboration with partners such as the IWF, using hash-matching and AI classifiers to detect and block CSAM. Its Content Safety API is freely licensed to help others identify and remove abusive material, reflecting Google's ongoing commitment to child protection.
- 3.13. The Chair asked how Google ensures transparency in AI system development and manages the impacts of new iterations. Chloe explained that all Google AI policies are publicly available, outlining how their tools can be used. She noted that user chat history is turned off by default and that users must be signed in to use Gemini, which enables age assurance and appropriate safeguards for children. Chloe added that Google publishes regular transparency reports to maintain accountability.
- 3.14. Jess Asato MP questioned how children can trust that Gemini is safe and that the information it provides is accurate, noting Ofcom's finding that many young people believe AI outputs are true. Chloe acknowledged that AI is not perfect and explained that Gemini includes disclaimers reminding users to double-check information, with visible sources and links to encourage critical thinking. She stressed the importance of teaching young people to verify content and understand that AI can make mistakes or "hallucinate."
- 3.15. Jess also raised concerns about children forming relationships with AI companions rather than parents. Chloe responded that Google works with psychologists and educators and is funding further research through Google.org, including £20 million overall and £5 million specifically to study AI's impact on safety and wellbeing.

Theme 3: Young people and their experiences of AI

- 3.16. Tiffany and Leo (NSPCC Youth Ambassadors) spoke about their role in representing young people's voices and working with the NSPCC policy team to improve online safety. They stressed the importance of ensuring new technologies, including AI, are properly regulated and safe.
- 3.17. Tiffany shared insights from the Children's AI Summit, noting that many young people use AI mainly for studying and quizzes, with concerns about homework use linked more to academic pressure than to AI itself. Both highlighted that AI is increasingly integrated into social media apps like Snapchat and Instagram, often without clear controls to turn it off, making it hard for young people to avoid.
- 3.18. They emphasised the need for stronger AI literacy education for both children and parents, suggesting it be embedded in RSHE/PSHE curriculum. They also raised

concerns that reliance on AI tools for answers could reduce young people's critical thinking and analytical skills, and that children's voices should be included in discussions about how AI is developed and used.

- 3.19. Natasha Irons MP said it was fascinating to hear how young people are using technology and expressed concern not about Gemini specifically, but about AI being integrated into apps in ways that are hard to identify or control. She raised worries about exposure to inflammatory content and whether young people can recognise when algorithms are feeding them material that could lead to harmful "doom loops."
- 3.20. Tiffany suggested removing hard-integrated AI features and allowing users to opt in rather than being automatically exposed. Leo added that it's important to start by asking young people what they already know about AI and how algorithms work, as many don't understand what's happening behind the scenes. Tiffany also called for clearer, child-friendly versions of privacy policies and explanations of generative AI so children can better understand and control how their data is used. Google noted they provided this.
- 3.21. The Secretariat agreed to circulate the NSPCC Youth Manifesto, which contained many of the points raised by Leo and Tiffany.
- 3.22. Damian Hinds MP noted his concerns about the accessibility of Google's Family Link. Leo noted that while children are often more digitally advanced, there is a significant knowledge gap between them and their parents. He emphasised the need for stronger connections between schools, teachers, and parents to support effective digital education. Leo praised large tech companies for their online safety measures but highlighted a major concern with smaller platforms that lack similar safeguards. He cited Character AI as an example, referencing cases in the US where harmful chatbot interactions were linked to suicides. It was flagged that such platforms are not being audited and fall outside the scope of the Online Safety Act.
- 3.23. Jess Asato MP advocated for stronger AI literacy in school curricula, noting that even as a parent, she struggles to keep up with new AI tools. She questioned whether it's realistic to expect parents to know everything, emphasising that products should be inherently safe rather than relying on adults and children to protect themselves.
- 3.24. Natasha Irons MP compared the use of safety measures to providing car seatbelts as a protective measure. Jess highlighted the challenge of keeping up with multiple offerings from companies like Google and Meta and called for national guidelines and hard legislation requiring AI products to be safe by design before launch. Baroness Berger also suggested tracking usage of AI products in the UK, including age-specific breakdowns.

Theme 4: AI Regulation and recommendations

- 3.25. Professor Lorna Woods discussed the challenges in regulating AI, noting differences between regulation gaps, misfits, and enforcement gaps. She explained that AI regulation is complex, covering the creation of AI models, their deployment, and the downstream effects for users, with generative AI tools like ChatGPT often serving as key examples.
- 3.26. In terms of creation, she highlighted legal considerations around training data, model development, and data protection obligations, noting that the ICO's Children's Code requires protections for children and understandable privacy policies. She also raised issues around intellectual property, competition law, and the acquisition of data.
- 3.27. Regarding deployment, Lorna pointed out that many sector-specific regulations, such as those for toys or medical devices, do not account for AI, creating regulatory misfits, particularly for purely digital products. The Online Safety Act applies in some contexts, including AI used for safety tools or recommender systems. She highlighted legal gaps around equalities obligations, illegal automated speech, and the distinction between user-to-user and AI-to-user interactions, noting that whether content is captured under existing laws depends on the AI's function and the way it is used.
- 3.28. Lorna also emphasised enforcement challenges. While Ofcom and the ICO provide oversight, she noted gaps remain, with Ofcom not yet addressing AI functionalities comprehensively and the ICO having further scope to act on data protection.
- 3.29. Overall, she stressed that AI regulation is fragmented, with many areas where current laws do not neatly apply, leaving uncertainties around safety, fairness, and accountability.

4. Next steps

- 4.1. The Secretariat agreed to produce a summary of the meeting which will be shared with everyone here today.
- 4.2. The inquiry would be launched within the next fortnight. The IWF has prepared social media content for members to help publicise the inquiry, and the APPG website will be updated to feature all the information about the inquiry, and how to respond.
- 4.3. The call for evidence will be open for 8 weeks. Following this, the APPG will hold four evidence sessions in the New Year, based on the four themes of the inquiry, and develop recommendations for Government. The IWF will be in touch to share the dates and room details for these sessions.

5. AOB

- 5.1. There was no other business and the meeting was closed.