



children's charities' coalition on internet safety

Comments on GSMA's draft Statement of Mobile Privacy Principles

The UK Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety (CHIS) is pleased to have been invited to comment on the GSMA's discussion document.

The section on High Level Privacy Principles in the paper is a welcome acknowledgement of a set of key challenges facing a great many companies who have a commercial stake in the mobile phone and mobile services business.

The proof of the pudding, of course, will be in the eating. The true worth and effect of the GSMA's final statement will be seen in how it impacts the behaviour of the many different industry players for whom it is relevant and how this, in turn, impacts on the experience of end users.

In that connection we will restrict ourselves to commenting on the section which specifically addresses '*Children and Adolescents*'.

First of all we believe many services which are not necessarily *directed* at children or adolescents are nonetheless used by them in great numbers. We would expect service providers to be mindful of this. They ought to have and maintain accurate information on their users' demographics.

From surveys such as EU Kids Online we know, for example, that in the UK 34% of all 9-12 year olds have accounts with Facebook, even though Facebook's minimum age is 13. In other countries the proportions are higher. We suspect similar patterns may exist with services other than Facebook. Many of these services will be provided on or through mobile devices including by companies in membership of the GSMA. MNOs, and others, who now sit at several different points on the mobile value chain.

Commenting on this type of phenomenon, David Smith, a senior official with the UK's Office of the Information Commissioner expressed a view which we think will be shared by many similar office holders around the world:

..... sites must be mindful of the fact that – unless they can be confident that their age restrictions are rigorously observed – they will in some cases be processing the personal data of children who are under the age of 13. They should therefore ensure that they process that personal data in a way that is fair to children who may be younger, in particular that marketing messages are appropriate. Privacy notices should also be easily understood.

The text you have provided in the draft reads as follows

Children & Adolescents

An application or service that is directed at children and adolescents should ensure that the collection, access and use of personal information is appropriate in all given circumstances and compatible with national law.

There is a great deal of doubt about whether or not adult users are being properly informed about important aspects of the various services which they are joining.

We recently heard an example of a service being provided solely through a mobile phone handset. When asked if the would be new subscriber accepted all of the service's terms and conditions it emerged that they were spread over 66 mobile phone screens, in dense legal text presented in very small type.

It will rarely be appropriate for children and adolescents to be provided with information about, for example safety or privacy issues, in a manner which is identical to that which is provided for adults.

Service providers should be encouraged to experiment with less formal ways e.g. icons or pictograms to communicate essential safety, cost or privacy messages. We feel this particularly strongly where there is any kind of location element associated with the service.

We appreciate that many MNOs do not want ever to be thought of as marketing directly to children and young people. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that position, such a self-denying ordinance ought not to be a barrier to explaining how to use mobiles and services provided on them in the safest possible way.

Yours sincerely,



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