

Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety



The Rt. Hon David Blunkett MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
50, Queen Anne's Gate
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10th July, 2004

Dear David Blunkett,

Identity cards – the next steps

Thank you for inviting our comments on your consultation document.

People tend to behave badly if they believe there is little or no chance of them being caught or held accountable for their actions. Sadly, that is the reality behind a number of the problems which bedevil child safety on the internet. Sexual grooming by paedophiles, pornographic spam, online stalking, abusive emails, harassment and bullying are all made much easier by the internet's unique ability to facilitate deception.

If a highly secure and reliable national identity card system were to be introduced which had an online component, we can see how this would greatly assist with the development of much safer environments for children online. This would be highly advantageous in terms of education and many other services. We note, for example, that the UK's six major mobile phone networks are having to construct their own age verification systems as part of their planned development of a safer environment for younger mobile phone users. This would hardly have been necessary if a national identity card scheme had been in place.

There are several other online services which could benefit from the existence of a national identity card system e.g. both the Direct Marketing Association and the Advertising Standards Authority make recommendations in respect of selling goods or services to children and young people, or about collecting information from them, and these are age related, but neither has any practical advice to offer about how anyone might ascertain, in an online environment, what a person's age actually is. There are other areas where goods or services are being sold or promoted online, or where information is being sought, where again age is or ought to be a factor but where there is as yet no reliable means of verifying it.

We note that following the report of the enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié the government is already committed to introducing a system of unique identifiers for all children in the UK. We trust that the two systems will be dovetailed.

Yours sincerely,

John Carr
Secretary

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