



Consultation response form

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to 'content and activity' which 'disproportionately affects women and girls'?</p>	<p>Confidential: No</p> <p>The Men and Boys Coalition charity is the community network for the UK's men and boys' health and wellbeing sector. Our members include more than 100 leading practitioners, academics, charities and advocates whose work is dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of men and boys. We are very clear that we fully support any measures to support the health and wellbeing of women and girls – including ending online harm.</p> <p>We have two requests, and this is based on (i) a range of Parliamentary Questions (ii) discussions with Ofcom in early 2024, and, (iii) the government defines crimes 'violence against women and girls which disproportionately affect women and girls as also including men and boys too. See Annex 1 for links.</p> <p>It is also based on the clear position that the more that can be done to reduce online harms affecting men and boys, it will not only benefit them, it will also benefit women and girls too. We need to cure the causes (online harm on men and boys) which then deal with symptoms such as online harms on women and girls. If we only focus on the latter symptoms, we will never deal with the causes – and these will not disappear. This is crucial to these requests below.</p> <p>Request 1: That Ofcom should produce guidance to tech companies on “A safer life online for men and boys.”</p> <p>Whilst the Online Safety Act 2023 states that Ofcom must produce online guidance for women and girls (which we welcome), this legislation leaves open the option for Ofcom to produce similar guidance for men and boys too. Such guidance would reflect the differences in online harms impacting men and boys, not least in addressing the risks and potential harms arising from toxic social media influencers, misogynistic online communities and algorithms promoting violent content.</p>

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	<p>Request 2: If Request 1 is not agreed to then at least this guidance must be explicitly clear that this included men and boys and the proposed actions apply to the online safety of men and boys too.</p> <p>This is also not by using gender-neutral terminology such as “this all affects everyone”. It must explicitly use the term “men and boys”.</p> <p>Request 1 is far more preferable especially as it means that there can remain a focus on online harms for women and girls without shoehorning men and boys in. Having guidance for both genders is the most sensible, practical and inclusive way forward – and will fully comply with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>If Request 2 is agreed instead of Request 1, this must be seen as a staging post to eventually creating specific guidance for men and boys</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We fully recognise the disproportionate harm affecting women and girls online and the aims of this guidance.</p> <p>However, not acknowledging at all the online harms, especially to boys and young men online, in this guidance – and its applicability to men and boys too, would mean two things:</p> <p>(1) Ofcom does not believe or recognise that boys, young men and men overall suffer ANY explicit online harms – including harms because they are men and boys.</p> <p>This would be despite the welcome focus on online harms affecting boys and young men including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• those stemming from the TV drama, Adolescence and the wider debate on toxic influencers on boys and young men;• research from the Youth Endowment Fund which showed high levels of online harms around violent content, gangs and intimate image abuse;• the government’s recognition of the impact of sextortion on boys and young men up to and including several suicides, which coroners have linked to this crime;• levels of online bullying and threat of violence that boys and young men are susceptible to;• levels of cyber-stalking. <p>See Annex 2 for links.</p> <p>(2) Ofcom is placing no requirement on tech companies to take any action at an individual or systemic level on online harms affecting men and boys. This would disadvantage all those individual men and boys who are affected by online harms.</p> <p>Whilst women and girls are disproportionately affected overall, individual men</p>

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	<p>and boys should be or feel unprotected.</p> <p>Tech companies should not believe that they do not have any responsibility, nor applicable guidance, to online harms against men and boys.</p> <p>Men and boys will feel there is no one responsible nor accountable for the online harm perpetrated against them.</p> <p>It would also mean that the Ofcom Guidance would be susceptible to a challenge under the Equality Act 2010 as it would be expecting tech companies to provide enhanced support and responsibilities for one sex (females) over another (males).</p> <p>This is why Ofcom must make it very clear that tech companies have the same responsibilities to protect men and boys from harm as they rightly do women and girls.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Annex 1: Ofcom Guidance</p> <p>(1) Government responses are clear via Parliamentary Questions that this Ofcom Guidance applies to applies to Men and Boys.</p> <p>(i) 24 November 2023: Gender-Based Violence</p> <p>https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2023-11-15.2224.h&p=25859</p> <p>This shows the guidance does apply to men and boys</p> <p>(ii) 9 April 2025: Internet - Men</p> <p>https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2025-04-01.43154.h&s=%22Boys%22#g43154.q0</p> <p>This shows that tech companies must proactively protect men and boys from online harms</p> <p>(2) Discussions with Ofcom</p> <p>Discussion between the Men and Boys Coalition and Ofcom took place in February 2024 on this matter and Ofcom’s recognised the guidance would apply to men and boys too and would need to say so.</p> <p>(3) Government definition</p> <p>The Government (current and past) recognises that “the term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls...While we use the term ‘violence against women and girls’, throughout this Strategy, this refers to all victims of any of these offences.” This means the term includes men and boys.</p> <p>This is from the “Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy”:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy</p>

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	<p>In addition, the current Government's welcome plans to halve crimes classed as 'violence against women and girls' in a decade include male victims of such crimes.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Annex 2: Online against Men and Boys</p> <p>(1) Netflix Adolescence</p> <p>This drama highlighted the impact of online harms on boys and young men.</p> <p>(2) Youth Endowment Fund (Dec 2024)</p> <p>Research from the Youth Endowment Fund showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teenage boys (70%) and girls (70%) are equally likely to report seeing violence online• Of those children who've seen weapons on social media, boys are more likely to say they've seen zombie knives or machetes (36% vs 32% of girls)• Boys (27%) and girls (27%) are equally likely to have seen sexually violent content or threats on social media• 34% of boys and 32% of girls have seen online content promoting gangs• 29% of boys and 29% of girls have seen online acts of violence against young people• 25% of boys in relationships have had explicit or intimate images or videos shared online (10% girls) <p>Research: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2024/</p> <p>It is therefore incongruous given the statistics above that there should be no specific guidance for men and boys with respect to online harms, but there is for women and girls. This is not an inclusive or equal approach.</p> <p>(3) Sextortion</p> <p>Internet Watch Foundation found that that 91% of victims of online sextortion are boys aged 14-17.</p> <p>https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/teenage-boys-targeted-as-hotline-sees-heartbreaking-increase-in-child-sex-tortion-reports/</p> <p>National Crime Agency launches online campaign to tackle 'sex-tortion' among young teenage boys</p> <p>https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/national-crime-agency-launches-online-campaign-to-tackle-sex-tortion-among-young-teenage-boys</p> <p>(4) Cyber-stalking</p> <p>According to the Office for National Statistics, 878,000 men have been victims of cyber stalking since the age Of 16. They make one in three of all cyber stalking</p>

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	<p>victims (equivalent figure is 1.742 million)</p> <p>Research: Office for National Statistics - Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2023/254). https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/stalkingfindingsfromthecrimesurveyforenglandandwales</p>
<p>Question 2: Do you have any comments on the nine proposed actions? Please provide evidence to support your answer.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Question 3: Do you have any comments about the effectiveness, applicability or risks of the good practice steps or associated case studies we have highlighted in Chapter 3, 4 and 5? Are there any additional examples of good practices we should consider? Please provide evidence to support your comment.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Question 4: Do you have any feedback on our approach to en-</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>couraging providers to follow this guidance, including our proposal to publishing an assessment of how providers are addressing women and girls' safety? Do you have any examples or suggestions of other ways we could encourage providers to take up the 'good practice' recommendations?</p>	
<p>Question 5: Do you have any comments on our impact assessment, rights assessment, or equality impact assessment? Please provide any information or evidence in support of your views.</p>	N/A
<p>Question 6: Do you agree that our draft Guidance is likely to have positive effects on opportunities to use Welsh and treating Welsh no less</p>	N/A

WARNING: This consultation response contains language and/or material that may be distressing

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favourably than English? If you disagree, please explain why, including how you consider the draft Guidance could be revised to have positive effects or more positive effects, or no adverse effects or fewer adverse effects on opportunities to use Welsh and treating Welsh no less favourably than English.	

Please complete this form in full and return to OS-Section54@ofcom.org.uk.