

Press release: BBFC proposed to enforce age verification of online pornography

Age verification will mean anyone who makes pornography available online on a commercial basis must ensure under 18s in the UK cannot access it. This is part of the Government's continuing work to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

The BBFC has unparalleled expertise in classifying content and has a proven track record of interpreting and implementing legislation as the statutory authority for age rating videos under the Video Recordings Act.

This, along with its work with industry on the film classification system and more recently classifying material for mobile network operators, makes them the preferred choice for regulator.

Digital Minister Matt Hancock said:

One of the missions of age verification is to harness the freedom of the internet while mitigating its harms. Offline, as a society we protect children from viewing inappropriate adult material by ensuring pornography is sold responsibly using appropriate age checks. It is now time that the online world follows suit. The BBFC are the best placed in the world to do this important and delicate task.

David Austin, Chief Executive Officer at BBFC said:

The BBFC's primary aim is to protect children and other vulnerable groups from harmful content and we are therefore pleased to accept the Government's proposed designation.

Age-verification barriers will help to prevent children accessing or stumbling across pornographic content online. The UK is leading the way with this age-verification regime and will set an international precedent in child protection.

The government's proposal must be approved by Parliament before the BBFC is officially designated as the age-verification regulator.

The regulator will notify non-compliant pornographic providers, and be able to direct internet service providers to prevent customers accessing these sites. It will also notify payment-services providers and other ancillary service providers of these sites, with the intention that they can withdraw

their services.

The Government will shortly also publish guidance on how the regulator should fulfil its duties in relation to age verification.

Notes to Editors:

- Once designated, the regulator will develop and issue guidance (subject to parliamentary approval) on the age-verification arrangements for online pornographic material that it will treat as compliant and the role of ancillary service providers
- With regards to privacy, the regulator's guidance will set out the expectation that age-verification services and online pornography providers should have regard to the ICO's guidance on data protection and wider data protection laws..
- The Digital Economy Act requires that companies delivering adult content in the UK act responsibly by having robust age verification controls in place to prevent children accessing explicit material.
- The regulator will also have powers to take action where a person is making available extreme pornographic material on the internet in the United Kingdom. Extreme pornography is defined in section 22 of the Digital Economy Act.
- Age verification for online pornography is being taken forward alongside implementation of the Government's recently launched [Internet Safety Strategy](#).
- A 2016 report by the NSPCC found that nearly two thirds (65%) of 15-16 year olds and just under half (48%) of 11-16 year olds had viewed online pornography. Over a quarter (28%) of 11-12 year olds had seen pornography on the internet. It also found that children were just as likely to stumble across pornography (28%) as to search for it deliberately (19%).
- Research shows that viewing pornography at a young age can cause distress, and can have a harmful effect on sexual development, beliefs, and relationships. Pornography tops the list of online risks named by children, with more than one in five young people expressing concern about such content according to [EU Kids Online research in 2013](#).

[News story: Brakes are off as reactor clean-up moves forward](#)

Engineers also used the wheels from a kitchen can opener, attached to the handbrake, to help steer a camera inside the Prototype Fast Reactor (PFR) for a survey inside the plant.

Conditions inside the reactor make it impossible for workers to access, meaning photographs taken by the piece of kit help in understanding how best

to go about dismantling the redundant facility.

Chris Irwin, Senior Design Engineer, came up with the innovative concept. He said:

I was opening a can of beans at home and realised that the cutting wheel of a can opener was exactly what was needed to make the required diamond-shaped wheel.

I bought four of them and took the wheels off. The camera needed to be guided over obstacles within the reactor, so we realised the incremental nature of the clicks on a handbrake would give us the precise control that we needed.

This is the latest in a long line of novel approaches developed by the company's workforce, with blu-tack and Cillit Bang among the everyday items that have previously been used to help deliver safe and cost-effective clean-up on behalf of the site's owner, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

We are delivering one of the most challenging closure programmes in Europe, but this is another example where innovative, simple solutions prove critical in safely delivering complex projects.

PFR is one of three reactors at the former centre of fast reactor research. It was closed down in 1994, 20 years after it began producing power.

[Press release: Farmer fined for illegal waste site](#)

A County Durham man has been convicted of operating an illegal waste site in a prosecution brought by the Environment Agency.

Stephen Anthony Suddes, 53, appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrate's Court on Wednesday 13 December 2017 for operating a waste facility without a permit at his Thornley Pit House farm in Bishop Auckland.

Suddes, who has two previous convictions for waste offences, admitted the charges. He was handed a fine of £1,640 and ordered to pay costs of £1,500 and a £165 victim surcharge.

Under the same prosecution, Kevin Gray, 53, of Wear Street, Tow Law, on 6 September pleaded guilty for depositing controlled waste on a site without an environmental permit. He was fined £400 and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, solicitor Laura Taylor told the court that Suddes deliberately and flagrantly disregarded the law over several months.

Environment Agency officers visited Suddes farm several times between 24 May 2016 and 31 October 2016. Each time they observed illegal activity including large piles of waste containing metals, wood, plastics, rubble and soils, and clear signs that waste had been burnt. On two occasions they recorded a white van owned by Kevin Gray Building Services tipping construction and demolition waste on the farm.

David O'Toole of the Environment Agency said:

Suddes has repeatedly put the environment at risk by deliberately ignoring the law for financial gain. Illegal waste activity such as this has a detrimental impact on the community and environment, as well as undermining legitimate businesses. We'll continue to work hard to ensure enforcement action is taken against those who flout the law.

Anyone who suspects that waste is being disposed of on an illegal waste fire is urged to report the matter to our incident hotline on 0800 807060.

[Press release: North East youngster's winning design for flood wardens](#)

A Sunderland youngster flooded with creativity has designed a winning logo for the region's Flood Wardens.

The Environment Agency hosted a special assembly at Hetton Lyons Primary School to present year 5 pupil Sally Lockey with a flood warden jacket.

Her design beat more than 300 submitted across the north east and will now be printed on all of the new blue flood warden jackets in the region.

And the new logo will also be printed on pavements outside north east schools with Rainworks spray – an invisible spray which will only show the logo when it rains.

It means pupils at the school will be reminded of the importance of being floodaware at key times.

Coun. James Blackburn, Hetton Town Mayor David Wallace, and flood wardens from Durham were at the special assembly to congratulate the youngster.

Winner Sally Lockey with her logo design

Important job for youngsters

Taryn Al-Mashgari, Flood Community Engagement Officer who covers the Tyne and Wear area, said:

The winning logo will be worn by flood wardens right across the north east so it was an important job for these youngsters.

We got more than 300 entries, which is fantastic, and it was tough for the judging panel. But the winning logo incorporated all of the aspects of a flood warden and that's why we chose it.

We're working closely with schools to make sure young people understand what it means to be flood resilient and how they can be prepared, so that communities are prepared for future generations.

We've talked to them about the importance of flood wardens and what they do and it's been fun for the children to come up with this new design.

L-R: Taryn Al-Mashgari, Environment Agency; Flood warden Margaret Horseman; Mayor David Wallace with the flood emergency 'grab bag' given to the school; Flood warden Sue Williams, and Coun. James Blackburn, with logo design winner Sally Lockey wearing the flood warden jacket and with the new Rainworks stencil.

School presentations

Environment Agency Flood Engagement Officers gave presentations at schools across the north east during the competition to raise awareness of flooding with children and start them thinking about how to prepare for flooding.

Sarah Staward, Year 5 teacher at the school, added:

The children really enjoyed learning about flooding and the role and qualities of the Environment Agency flood wardens. The competition also supports our work as an eco-school.

Flood wardens are community volunteers who support their communities during flooding incidents – including activating a community's flood action plan, ensuring the most vulnerable in their community are safe and working closely with the Environment Agency.

Flood warden Sue Williams, who congratulated Sally at the assembly, said:

These new flood warden jackets are excellent as the blue colour identifies us as flood wardens and distinguishes us from

organisations at the scene. The winning symbol is fantastic and captures everything about our role.

[Communities are urged to check their flood risk and find out how they can prepare for flooding](#)

News story: NHS becomes first healthcare system in the world to publish numbers of avoidable deaths

The NHS will become the first healthcare organisation in the world to publish estimates of how many patients may have died because of problems in their care.

The publication follows a promise by the health secretary after a 2016 Care Quality Commission report found that the NHS was missing opportunities to learn from patient deaths, and that too many families were not being included or listened to when an investigation happened.

The data will be published each quarter by individual trusts. 171 of the 223 trusts in England have already released or are releasing their first estimates by the end of December.

Each trust will make its own assessment of the number of deaths due to problems in care. The data will not be comparable and will not be collated centrally. This will allow trusts to focus on learning from mistakes and sharing lessons across their organisations and their local healthcare systems.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Every death resulting from a failing in care is an absolute tragedy, and despite the NHS being ranked as the world's safest healthcare system for a second time, we still have a long way to go.

Too often I have heard from families saying that after mistakes happen they feel like a wall has gone up in the NHS, but publishing this data will help give grieving families the openness and answers they deserve. It marks a significant milestone in ensuring the NHS learns from every tragic case, sharing lessons across the whole system to prevent mistakes recurring and ultimately delivering safer care for all patients in the future.

The programme is likely to cover between 1,250 and 9,000 deaths, which research suggests is the number of deaths each year that may be down to problems in care – a fraction of the 19.7 million treatments and procedures carried out by the NHS in 2016 to 2017.

These deaths range from rare but high-profile failings in care, to those which involve terminally ill patients who die earlier than expected. These deaths may make up a large number of those caused by problems in care, showing the need to continue to focus on improving all care, including end of life care.

By collecting this data and taking action in response to failings in care, NHS trusts and foundation trusts will be able to give grieving families an open and honest account of the circumstances that led to a death. This work is already happening in some parts of the NHS, for example at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which recently held its first memorial service for those who have died in its care.

The data will allow trusts to learn from every failing in care, and then share lessons across the NHS to better protect patients in the future. For example, the Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, which as part of the Greater Manchester Partnership is working across Greater Manchester on mortality reviews, so that lessons learned are shared with other providers for the good of patients across the area.

Prof Ted Baker, chief inspector of hospitals at the Care Quality Commission, said:

The NHS is the first healthcare system to commit to reporting and publishing information on the number of avoidable deaths in its hospitals and the work that is being done by individual NHS trusts to learn from those deaths.

This new level of transparency will be central to improving care and ensuring the safety of the NHS services we all rely on. We will use this information alongside the findings of our inspections to identify where providers must make improvements and to share good practice where we find hospitals that are doing it well.

We can be proud of the progress made over the past year, but the challenge now is to deliver the full vision of a safer learning culture.

Executive Medical Director of NHS Improvement Dr Kathy McLean said:

NHS trusts are undergoing a culture change in how they learn from deaths. Trusts across the country are improving how they engage and support bereaved families, how they ensure they learn from mistakes and share good practice.

We have been clear that the change required of trust boards is one of culture and leadership, rather than one of process and counting.