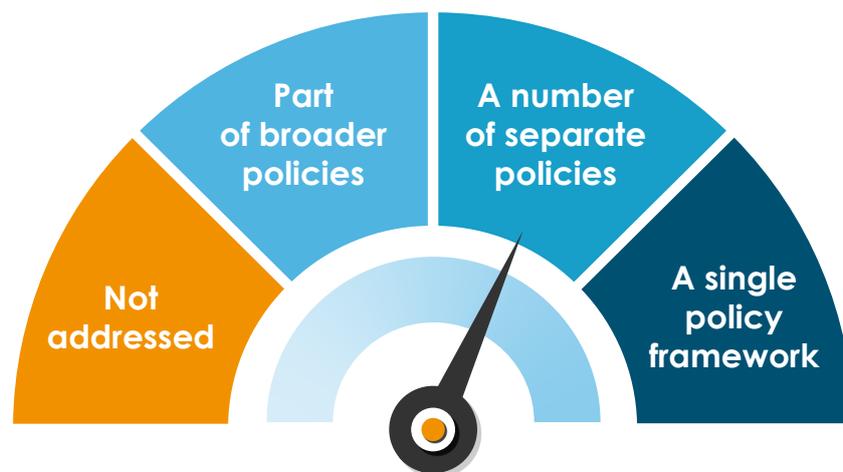**Better Internet for Kids**

United Kingdom

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Map is a tool used to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU Member States on the themes and recommendations of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (or BIK Strategy) first set out by the European Commission in May 2012. The third BIK Policy Map report (2020) examines the implementation of the BIK Strategy in 30 European countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

For each country in the BIK Policy Map study, we outline findings for Policy frameworks, Policy making and Policy implementation, and conclude by providing a selection of good practices.

Download the full **BIK Policy Map report** from the Better Internet for Kids website.

1. Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks refer to the organising principles and long-term goals for policies, guidelines, decisions and other statements made at the national level in the course of putting into practice the BIK Strategy.

In the United Kingdom, the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children has not featured in national policy debates on the subject of children's use of the internet. However, its topics are covered in a number of separate policies, principally through laws and regulations which address some of the four different pillars of the BIK Strategy. Some examples are given below.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people

- The UK has no existent policies supporting the production of high-quality online content.

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

- Keeping children safe in education (Department for Education) (2015). Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment, setting out the legal duties one must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18 in schools and colleges.

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. From September 2020, relationships education is statutory for primary schools, relationships and sex education for secondary schools, and health education for all state schools. The curriculum contains extensive internet safety and harms content. See the statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, and teachers.

- The computing curriculum. Contains elements of online safety in the curriculum of every key stage.

- Keeping learners safe (Wales). Role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002 (Jan 2015).

- National guidance for child protection in Scotland (May 2014).

- Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland (Aug 2017).

Pillar 3: Creating a safer environment for children online

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Age Appropriate Design Code. The code was published in January 2020, but it stills needs to go through some processes, both parliamentary and European, before it comes into force.

- Online Harms White Paper. A Government Bill was due to be introduced before Parliament late in 2020.

- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) Media Literacy Strategy is part of the Online Harms White Paper. The DCMS has commissioned a media literacy mapping exercise and literature review which was due to feed back in 2020

Pillar 4: Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation

- Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Exploitation and Abuse. Actions developed by five Governments to counter online child sexual exploitation and abuse (March 2020).

2. Policy making

Policy making refers to the general process by which policies are developed within each country, including how coordination and oversight is managed, the extent to which the policy agenda is informed by an evidence base, and whether there are arrangements for young people to be involved in the policy process.

2.1 How are policies coordinated?

In the UK, more than one ministry, agency or body is responsible for coordinating policies addressing the BIK Strategy with four to six ministries involved in the process.

Primarily this is the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Home Office, in relation to online harms. However, the Department for Education, Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Care also make policy related to the online safety of children. Other state actors involved include the Cabinet Office, including the Government Equalities Office contributions, the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

2.2 Who is primarily in charge of policy coordination?

Responsibility for coordination of BIK-related policies varies by each respective pillar of the BIK Strategy.

- Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people, is primarily overseen by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

- The Department for Education has the main responsibility for Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment.

- For Pillar 3: Tools and regulation for an online safe environment, the Home Office is leading.

- Pillar 4: Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation, is primarily overseen by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). The Government has also supported the WeProtect Global Alliance to end online child sexual abuse.

Inter-departmental communication is primarily facilitated by the UKCIS, the UK Council for Internet Safety. The Executive Board is chaired by three Government Ministers – DCMS, Home Office and Department for Education.

2.3 Data collection in the last three years

Data collection to support policy making related to the BIK Strategy includes national and regional surveys with quantitative data specifically focused on children's use of the internet, quantitative data on some topics of children's use of the internet collected as part of a broader survey, and qualitative research specifically focused on children's use of the internet.

For details of relevant research taking place in the UK on children and online safety, please see the website of the UK Safer Internet Centre, which hosts the research findings of the

Evidence Group of the UK Council for Internet Safety, including research highlights – two page summaries, including methodology, sample size and key findings. Studies include:

- Role and influence of images and videos in young people's digital lives. Sample=1,500 young people aged 8-17. Methodology: online survey conducted by ResearchBods in December 2016. The research was commissioned by the UK Safer Internet Centre.

- Young people's use of digital media in their relationships and friendships. Sample=2,000 young people aged 8-17. Methodology: online survey conducted by Censuswide in December 2017. The research was commissioned by the UK Safer Internet Centre.

- Young people's attitudes and behaviours with regards to sharing content online. Sample= 2,004 young people aged 8-17 in the UK. Methodology: online survey conducted by Censuswide in December 2018, supplemented by qualitative data from 10 Childnet Digital Leaders aged 11-18). The research was commissioned by UK Safer Internet Centre.

- Young people's understanding and experiences with regards to online identities. Sample= 2,001 young people aged 8-17 in the UK. Methodology: online survey with young people and parents of those same children, supplemented by focus groups with 13 children aged 9-14 and an online survey of 41 Childnet 'Digital Leaders' aged 8-18. The research was conducted by Censuswide in December 2019 and was commissioned the UK Safer Internet Centre.

- Online experiences of vulnerable young people. Sample=2,988 young people aged 10-16 from schools across Suffolk. Methodology: annual Cybersurvey of Youthworks, respondents were grouped based on vulnerability characterised by being in care or being a young carer, having special needs, a mental health difficulty, communication difficulties or physical disabilities.

- For regular data collection, Ofcom (the regulator for communications services) gathers yearly quantitative and qualitative data in this field. See the Ofcom Children and parents, media use and attitudes report launched in February 2020.

- South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) (part of the UK Safer Internet Centre) publishes an Annual assessment report on school online safety policy and practice.

- Young people's experience of peer-related online sexual harassment – Project DeSHAME. Sample=1,559 young people aged 13-17 in the UK (part of a larger international sample of 3,000 young people). Methodology: online survey supplemented by focus groups with 13-17 year olds and qualitative research with teachers and professionals. The study is a collaboration between Childnet (UK), Kek Vonal (Hungary), Save the Children (Denmark) and UCLan (UK), and is co-financed by the European Union. The latest data is from 2017.

- 2018 Pupil online safety survey on young people's online behaviour. Sample= c.40,000 children aged 7-16 recruited from schools across the UK. The survey was conducted in

February 2018 by London Grid for Learning (LGfL) and the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

- Young people's everyday use of technology in their relationships with peers, partners and potential partners. Sample=2,135 young people aged 14-24 across the UK. Methodology: online survey supplemented by face-to-face interviews with 10 young people aged 14-25 and 13 focus groups involving 69 young people aged 11-20. The 'Digital Romance' research was conducted by Brook and NCA-CEOP (National Crime Agency – Child Exploitation & Online Protection) in the first half of 2017.

- Prevalence and impact of consuming online pornography among young people. Sample= 1,001 young people representative of UK population aged 11-16. Methodology: online survey supplemented by online focus groups. The research was conducted by Middlesex University and ResearchBods and commissioned by NSPCC and the Children's Commissioner for England.

- Children's livestreaming behaviours. Sample= 2,000 adults representative of parents of children aged 4-16 in the UK. Methodology: online survey with parents supplemented by 10 interviews with parents of children aged 10-16 years old who are regular watchers and creators of vlogs and/or livestreamed content. Commissioned by Internet Matters and Huawei in 2018.

- The breadth of research in this area was used as the main evidence review for the Online Harms White Paper. See: Livingstone, S., Davidson, J. & Bryce, J., with Batool, S. Haughton, C., & Nandi, A. (2017) Children's online activities, risks and safety: A literature review by the UKCCIS Evidence Group. London: Department of Digital, Media, Culture and Sport.

- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) age-appropriate design code was also informed by research:

  o Livingstone, S. Stoilova, M. and Nandagiri, R. (2018) Children's data and privacy online: Growing up in a digital age. An evidence review. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

  o Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S. and Nandagiri, R. (2019) Children's data and privacy online: Growing up in a digital age. Research findings. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

There is quantitative data available on some topics of children's use of the internet, collected as part of a broader survey:

- The Understanding Society longitudinal household study includes a paper self-completion questionnaire for 10-15 year olds in the household which asks questions about internet use. Sample=c. 40,000 households interviewed annually in the UK, yielding between 2,000 and 5,000 interviews with 10-15 year olds (latest data from wave 11, 2019-20). The research is commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and led by the Institute for Social and Economic Research

(ISER) at the University of Essex. It is conducted by Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research.

- The annual Crime Survey for England and Wales (official national statistics) includes a survey for 10-15 year olds in randomly selected households in England and Wales. It asks about their use of the internet and how they behave online, and covers topics like sharing personal information, meeting strangers online, and online bullying. Sample=nationally representative survey of c.50,000 households, yielding c.3,000 interviews with 10-15 year olds annually. The survey is conducted by Kantar Public.

- The Millennium Cohort Study is a longitudinal study following the lives of around 19,000 young people born across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2000-01. The 2018-19 sweep (when the cohort was 17 years old) includes a young person online questionnaire asking questions on internet and social media use, and a self-completion questionnaire which includes questions on risky online behaviours. Sample=10,757 17-year olds in the UK. The study is conducted by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (part of UCL Institute of Education) and is core funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and a consortium of government departments.

- The Taking Part cross-sectional survey in England (official national statistics) has been running continuously since 2005 and includes sections for young people (aged 11-15) and children (aged 5-10), asking questions on digital activities, internet use, the use of social media for culturally-related purposes and sport, and eSports. Sample: in 2018/19 the face-to-face data collection for Taking Part was designed to yield a representative cross-sectional sample of c8,100 adults aged 16+ who are normally resident in England, along with a representative sample of resident youths (aged 11-15) and children (aged 5- 10). The survey is conducted by Ipsos Mori and Natcen Social Research and is mainly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (part funded by Sport England, Historic England and the Arts Council England).

- The CHILDWISE Monitor provides trend data on media behaviours among children and young people aged 5-16, including children's internet use. Sample = c.2,000 children and young people aged 5-16 in 69 schools across the UK (children aged 5 and 6 surveyed online at home, and children aged 7-16 surveyed online in school).

- The Annual Bullying Survey conducted by Ditch the Label collects data on experiences of bullying (including cyberbullying) from 12-20 year olds across the UK. Sample= the latest wave conducted in late 2017/early 2018 yielded data from 9,150 people aged 12-20 in secondary schools and colleges across the UK.

- The Mental Health of Children and Young People survey conducted by NHS Digital includes information about social media use and cyberbullying. Sample = the latest wave in 2017 achieved c.4,000 face-to-face in-home interviews with young people aged 11-19 living in England, who were randomly selected from the NHS Patient Register. The findings were supplemented with data from parent interviews and teachers for a total of 9,117 children aged 2-19.

- The NSPCC and O2's 2017 Net Aware research includes data on young people's online behaviour and knowledge around online safety. Sample=1,696 11-18 year olds who were engaged through schools across the UK and Childline's engagement platforms (e.g., Facebook).

There is also data available from qualitative research specifically focused on children's use of the internet:

- Parental views/experiences of children's use of screen based digital media. Methodology: in-home interviews with 73 purposively selected families in London, UK, with children aged 0-17. Findings in Blum-Ross, A. & Livingstone, S. (2018). The trouble with "screen time" rules. In G. Mascheroni, C. Ponte, & A. Jorge (eds.), Digital parenting. The challenges for families in the digital age (p. 179-187). Göteborg: Nordicom.

- Young children's access to and use of technology. Methodology: in-home interviews and observations with 10 UK families with a child aged between 6 and 7 who used a digital technology at least once a week (part of an international study, involving six other countries). The study was funded and coordinated by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. Findings in Chaudron et al (2018). Rules of engagement: Family rules on young children's access to and use of technologies. In S. Danby, M. Fleer, C. Davidson, & M. Hatzigianni, M. (eds.), Digital Childhoods: International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development (pp.131-145). Berlin: Springer.

- Research to inform the development of ICO's Age Appropriate Design Code for online services. Methodology: qualitative research with c.150 children aged 3-17 from nine schools across the UK, plus facilitated research with c.130 children aged 7-16 from seven schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, to explore understanding and views around personal data; supplemented by views of parents and carers on personal data issues. The research was conducted by Revealing Reality in 2018, and was commissioned by the Information Commissioner's Office.

- Young people's experience of livestreaming. Methodology: online consultation with 21 Childnet 'Digital Leaders' (young people aged 11-18 years trained by Childnet to be peer educators in their schools) about their experiences of livestreaming; supplemented with data from an online survey question with 500 children aged 8-17, conducted by Populus in February 2017. The research was conducted by Childnet in early 2017.

- Children's use of social media and its impact. Methodology: Eight discussion groups with 32 children aged 8-12 across the country recruited in 'friendship pairs' (supplemented by child and parent 'digital pre-tasks' and examples of social media activities through screenshots and photos). The research was conducted for the Children's Commissioner by Revealing Reality in 2018.

- Research to better understand the risks and benefits children experience while playing online games. Methodology: focus groups with 29 children between the ages of 10-16

chosen to represent a range of different gaming behaviours, across a range of games and supplemented by a five-day gaming diary. The research was carried out by Revealing Reality in September 2019, and was commissioned by the Children's Commissioners.

2.4 Involvement of young people in policy making

The involvement of young people in policy making is described as one whereby young people's interests are considered, but there is no formal arrangement. Informally this does take place. For example, the UK Safer Internet Centre has brought groups of young people to meet with the team at the DCMS working on the online harms policy development. Childnet's Digital Leaders responded to the Government's Green Paper and White Paper consultation. The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England also carries out such consultation work.

3. Policy implementation

Policy implementation refers to the involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the delivery of initiatives and the spread of activities as envisaged under each of the four pillars of the BIK Strategy.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people
Activities under Pillar 1 are led by the public service broadcaster, the BBC, with the Safer Internet Centre having a complementary role.

- The UK Safer Internet Centre has supported the European Commission's Positive Online Content Campaign (POCC).

- The BBC has created a lot of content for young people on themes around online safety, such as the Own It website.

- Industry providers, such as Netflix, Disney and Nickelodeon provide content for children online.

- Initiatives to encourage children's creativity and to promote positive use of the internet are, for example, the Childnet's Film Competition, the Welsh Government Safer Internet Day 2020 Competition or the BAFTA Young Game Designers Competition.

Summary of Pillar 1 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Initiatives to stimulate the production and visibility of quality content for children	☐	☐	☐

Initiatives to encourage children's creativity and to promote positive use of the internet	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to implement standards for quality online content for children	☐	☑	☐
Other relevant activity (please specify)	☐	☑	☐

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

In activities under Pillar 2, government ministries or departments play a complementary role. Besides that, a variety of actors play a role. Activities in this pillar include:

- Department for Education guidance to schools on teaching online safety.

- Online safety briefings by the UK Safer Internet Centre.

- Childnet Digital Leaders Programme, a peer education initiative.

- Activities to provide for online safety policies in schools such as the South West Grid for Learning's 360 degree safe tool.

- Guides produced by the Education Working Group of UKCIS: Guidance for external visitors to support online safety education, and Guidance for early years providers.

- Educate Against Hate resource on safeguarding students from radicalisation.

- Welsh Government – Hwb Online Safety Zone.

- NCA-CEOP's Thinkuknow programme.

- UK's Safer Internet Day activities.

- BBC Own It.

- Google's Be Internet Awesome and Be Internet Legends. Industry also supports programmes run by NGOs, Such as Facebook's support for Childnet Digital Leaders Programme, and industry support for the UK Safer Internet Centres checklists.

- LSE's parenting4digital future blog.

- The UKCIS Education for a Connected World framework.

- Project EVOLVE.

- BBC fake news teaching resources.

- Childnet's Trust Me resources for primary and secondary schools.

- CEOP Reporting Harmful Content Centre.

- UK Safer Internet Centre Helpline.

- Initiatives to monitor the effective functioning of reporting mechanisms at national level are proposed in the Online Harms White Paper.

Summary of Pillar 2 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
"Teaching online safety in schools"			
Strategies to include teaching online safety in schools	☑	☐	☐
Activities to reinforce informal education about online safety	☐	☐	☐
Activities to provide for online safety policies in schools	☐	☑	☐
Activities to ensure adequate teacher training in online safety	☐	☑	☐
Activities to support public-private partnerships in online safety	☐	☐	☐
"Digital and media literacy activities"			
Activities to support young people's technical skills required to use online media content and services	☑	☐	☐
Activities to encourage critical thinking around media industries and evaluating content for truthfulness, reliability	☐	☑	☐
Activities that encourage interaction, engagement and participation in the economic, social, creative, cultural aspects of society through online media	☐	☐	☐
Activities that promote democratic participation and fundamental rights on the internet	☐	☐	☐
Activities that challenge radicalisation and hate speech online	☐	☑	☐
"Scaling up awareness activities and youth participation"			
National support for public awareness-raising campaigns	☐	☑	☐

Involvement of children when developing national campaigns	☐	☑	☐
Involvement of children when developing legislation with an impact on their online activities	☐	☐	☐
Activities or initiatives to match the Commission's support for the national Youth Panels	☐	☑	☐
Industry funding and technical support for NGOs and education providers	☐	☑	☐
Industry dissemination of awareness material either online or at the point of sale	☐	☐	☐
"Simple and robust reporting tools for users"			
Mechanisms for reporting content and contacts that may be harmful for children such as cyberbullying or grooming	☑	☐	☐
Initiatives to facilitate cooperation between helplines and law enforcement	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to monitor the effective functioning of reporting mechanisms at a national level	☑	☐	☐

Pillar 3: Creating a safe environment for children online

Activities under Pillar 3 are led by a ministry or department, and the Safer Internet Centre has a complementary role. Activities include:

- UKCIS Safer by Design work and Online Harms work.

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Age Appropriate Design Code. This code has been published but is not yet in force.

- InternetMatters.org provides social media checklists created by the UK Safer Internet Centre.

- https://testmyprivacy.com. UK Safer Internet Centre tool to check if accounts have been hacked.

- http://testfiltering.com. UK Safer Internet Centre definitions of appropriate filtering and monitoring supporting the requirement for schools to use appropriate safeguards.

- The public service broadcaster, the BBC, has launched an app called Own It.

Summary of Pillar 3 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
"Age-appropriate privacy settings"			
Activities to ensure the implementation of EU legislation	☑	☐	☐
Self-regulatory measures by industry about age-appropriate privacy settings	☐	☐	☐
Awareness-raising activities regarding age-appropriate privacy settings	☐	☑	☐
Wider availability and use of parental controls			
Activities to promote the availability of parental control tools	☐	☑	☐
Tests and certification for parental control tools	☐	☐	☑
Efforts to support industry implementation of parental control tools	☐	☑	☐
"Wider use of age rating and content classification"			
Activities to promote the adoption of age rating and content classification among relevant stakeholders	☐	☑	☐
A complaints process for the effective functioning of such systems	☑	☐	☐
"Online advertising and overspending"			
Activities at the national level to ensure that legislation regarding online profiling and behavioural advertising is observed	☐	☑	☐
Support industry in developing codes of conduct regarding inappropriate advertising	☑	☐	☐
Monitor implementation of codes of conduct at the national level	☐	☑	☐

Pillar 4: Fighting against child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation

Activities under Pillar 4 are led by a government ministry or department. Different organisations have a complementary role. Bodies include:

- Home Office/WeProtect Global Alliance.

- National Crime Agency (NCA) .

- UK Safer Internet Centre, including the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) which provides the hotline component of the centre.

- StopItNow, NGO to stop the sexual abuse of children.

- Industry: internet service providers (ISPs) and filtering providers integrate blocking of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) content.

Recent changes:

- Increased resources for law enforcement bodies that fight against child abuse material online: The UK Government announced, on 17 September 2019, £30m pounds worth of funding to equip law enforcement with new technology to track down more paedophiles operating online. This includes investment in the UK's Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) and investments in artificial intelligence (AI) and age estimation tools.

- Effective safeguards in place to ensure democratic accountability in the use of investigative tools to combat child sexual abuse: The work of the UK hotline, the Internet Watch Foundation (WF), is subject to an appeals process. If someone wishes to appeal a IWF decision to remove content from the internet they can appeal on the IWF's website. The hotline is independently inspected every two years by a team of law enforcement, forensic and academic professionals led by a retired High Court Judge. The most recent of these inspections found the IWF to be compliant with best practice standards.

- Activities to support the functioning and visibility of hotlines at the national level: The Internet Watch Foundation has been working with the Home Office to raise awareness of the issue of child sexual abuse online with the 18-24 group of young men who it is known are most likely to stumble across this material online. The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) is the relevant unit within the Home Office with responsibility for this campaign. The IWF is also working with the unit on a future activity along with some of the technology companies within its membership to fund a further campaign to reach girls in the 11-13 age range and parents about the dangers of self-generated indecent images of children.

- Activities to support the improvement of cooperation between hotlines and industry for taking down child abuse material: The IWF continues to grow its membership both in the UK and internationally. It has welcomed companies like safaricom and MTN, two of the largest mobile network operators in Africa into its membership recently (152

members total). IWF continues to open reporting portals around the world and has opened 33 reporting portals including the first European portal in the Ukraine. The IWF has also been heavily involved in discussions with the UK Government about the future regulatory environment for online harms.

Summary of Pillar 4 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Increased resources for law enforcement bodies that fight against child abuse material online	☑	☐	☐
Effective safeguards in place to ensure democratic accountability in the use of investigative tools to combat child sexual abuse	☐	☑	☐
Activities to support the functioning and visibility of hotlines at the national level	☑	☐	☐
Activities to support the improvement of cooperation between hotlines and industry for taking down child abuse material	☐	☑	☐

4. Good practices

The following are two selected examples of good practices in supporting children's use of the internet in the UK:

Safer Internet Day in the UK

Safer Internet Day (SID) in the UK reached 49 per cent of 8-17 year olds in 2020, and 26 per cent of parents. This is a huge national and multi-sectoral campaign which has real reach and impact, and helps to engage ever-wider participants.

ReportHarmfulContent

The UK Safer Internet Centre's ReportHarmfulContent portal provides the public with independent advice and support to manage complaints regarding legal but harmful content.