



## **2. Outline of our services**

The BBC has a very clear strategy of supporting children from birth through to early adulthood, with three sites that reflect the varying levels of protection, computer literacy, independence and maturity as they grow up, as well as specific educational services offered by BBC Learning.

1. The CBeebies ([www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies)) and CBBC ([www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc)) websites enable children and their parents or carers to interact with us and each other in a safe, trusted and accessible environment. The sites provide high quality, engaging and relevant interactive content and experiences for children, as well as acting as a springboard to the best appropriate external websites for the under-12s.
2. The focus is on empowering children and giving them the opportunity to gain a deeper relationship with the BBC, the brands and characters, increasing the value they receive, the ownership they feel, and the impact they have on CBeebies and CBBC. To achieve this, the sites offer a range of innovative interactive tools and creative opportunities aimed at all British children, of every ability and background, giving them the space to publish their own content, thoughts and opinions. We also provide a dedicated 24/7 news service for children online as part of Newsround and through the PressPack section we can actively engage children in the topical issues that matter to them.
3. BBC Switch provides an online space for all teenagers, with content aimed at engaging young people, addressing their interests, and encouraging interaction. The site contains both supporting TV and radio programmes and free-standing content. ([www.bbc.co.uk/switch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/switch))
4. BBC Learning provides output for school-aged children across a broad range of subjects and skills. The following are linked to curriculum or specific skills.  
*Bitesize* – revision and recap service for all major subjects for children aged 5-16 ([www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks3bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks3bitesize))  
*Blast* – creative development for teenagers, currently focused on creative arts, including partnership with youth arts organisations ([www.bbc.co.uk/blast](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast))

Some services are designed for use in the classroom; others are increasingly used directly by learners at home or at school, without the need for tutor mediation.

Whether designed for relaxation or to deliver specific learning outcomes, all our sites share a philosophy to empower and engage young people in line with the BBC's public purposes.

They have a dual role to;

a) build on the BBC's reputation as a strong public service media brand in the UK (on TV and radio) – providing deeper, stickier, enriched, and engaging experiences around our existing content – by harnessing the known benefits of interactive and on-demand functionality,

b) extend reach (and relevance) to an increasingly digitally aware audience who are spending more and more of their dedicated 'media time' on the web and other digital platforms.

All BBC online services are subject to the BBC Editorial Guidelines (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/edguide>) and the BBC Online Services Guidelines (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/onguide> )

### **3. How and at what age we protect young people from inappropriate BBC material online.**

The BBC divides its online audience into distinct age categories with different content rules.

Under 7s  
7 to 12s  
12 to 16s  
16 to 18s  
18s and over

## **Under 7s – Cbeebies online**

This is a walled garden site designed for use by children with their parents or carers. All content is specifically targeted at the designated age range, and the only links off the site are from the Grown-ups support area to similar support sites, and to specifically approved third party sites maintained by the TV Independents responsible for the programmes. These are pre-vetted by BBC staff to conform to Editorial Guidelines.

In addition, users can link off to the main BBC homepages via our global navigation where all content is designed for family consumption unless otherwise stated.

## **7–12s – CBBC onlineless**

#### **4. How we protect young people from post watershed BBC material in an on-demand world**

The advent of video-on-demand on the web has brought new challenges. We can no longer simply rely on the TV transmission time of a programme to ring-fence material that is deemed unsuitable for children by using the 9pm Watershed and we have adapted our online services accordingly.

The BBC has led the way in considering how to provide parents with information to compl



Similarly, BBC Switch operates a rigorous policy when it comes to protecting our users from inappropriate content online. Whilst Switch's presence on third party sites is a key part of our offer to teenagers, allowing Switch to reach out to an audience that may not always be very familiar with the BBC offer, all our ventures in this space are fully moderated and carefully monitored. We include prominent links to features about online safety wherever possible and never link to live chat rooms from Switch.

## **6. How we protect against inappropriate User Generated Content**

To ensure that inappropriate content isn't published on the CBBC message boards, we have a number of procedures in place. These are;

- a) **Automatic filter** – inappropriate words are blocked from user names and messages at the point of posting. This filter includes swearing, sexual terms and racist or homophobic language. Non-CBBC or Newsround urls are also blocked, along with email addresses.
- b) **Pre-moderation**

central to the community would be rewarded for their good behaviour and disruptive members would have privileges removed. For BBC Switch, all submitted user generated content is pre-moderated before it can go live - although Switch also plans to move towards a more “trust and reputation” based system.

Exclusive pre-moderated public chat sessions with, for example, children’s favourite authors and presenters are an incentive we already use for the target age group to participate in the CBBC communities. Offering these exclusive events and other premium content discourages users from lying about their age and registering for services aimed at older users.

Increasingly, we are encouraging our users to send us photos and videos as well as text. All these are pre-checked to make sure that the material is suitable for publication on CBBC and to check that children do not publish sensitive personal information about themselves or others eg. school signs, road names, door numbers which could put them at risk, for example through ‘jigsaw id’.

In particular, when videos are submitted we normally require the telephone number of a guardian or parent, to get formal adult consent before publication. (This is in line with our TV policies and protects for example against children



For a very low level of interaction, for example playing a game online using a BBC registration system that does not hold any personal data, we will only require a check box stating that the child has the parent's approval. Whereas for a high level interaction, for example an appearance by a child on a TV programme, explicit verified parental consent on a variety of forms is required.

The BBC is presently engaged in a range of trials to review the use of parental consent by email, and by a registration system that would allow parents to decide what activities their children could engage in on BBC websites and what level of reporting they would receive. The BBC is also reviewing what rules

discouraging exclusive clubs and cliques. It can sometimes be difficult to spot a subtle pattern of bullying when looking at individual messages, out of context, in the moderation system, as the moderators do. So it is the hosts who play a vital part in being across all the various discussions and consequently being able to identify troublemakers as well as users who are in danger of being isolated.

We also encourage our audiences to make sure they are open and honest with their parents or guardians when communicating online. We reinforce our advice to children with the following information as part of our media literacy support:

“Make sure a parent, teacher or guardian knows when you're surfing the net. If you get an e-mail with rude or unpleasant things, you **MUST** tell a responsible adult straight away and **DON'T** reply to it! Remember that it's not your fault that someone has sent you this.”

### **9. Stranger Danger**

By keeping our message boards restricted by age, reverting to limited text functionality in games where moderation isn't available and keeping our moderators aware of the latest grooming techniques, we aim to minimise the potential for grooming online.

However, we believe there are a number of ways we can improve upon this

However, in spite of all these measures, the BBC would welcome a pan-industry initiative to explore the feasibility of developing an age verification system that could “talk” to a secure and reliable database containing relevant children’s personal information.

### **Parental Consent**

When creating a user account, children are advised to ask their parents’ permission, and make sure that their parents are aware that they will be using the message boards. The terms of use also make it clear that children should have a parent or guardian’s permission before using the message boards.

If a child posts a message which suggests that their parents don’t know or don’t want them to use our communities, we will message the user making it clear that they must have parental/guardian permission to use the message boards.

Some organisations require parental verification by return email for added security. However, our own user testing suggests that many children share their parents’

Such situations include: extreme bullying, eating disorders, self harm, domestic violence, depression, sexual or physical abuse or potential grooming.

When a child posts a message directly asking for help, or is troubled, a BBC staff host will post a reply using one of a list of 'distress responses', which cover scenarios ranging from having an eating disorder to domestic violence.

These responses have been developed with leading children's charities such as ChildLine and Childnet International and were revised with the help of trained counsellors. We also work closely with a children's psychologist and counsellor who gives public (and, where necessary, private) in-depth help to

S = Keep Safe  
M = Don't Meet Up  
A = Accepting emails can be dangerous  
R = Reliable? People may not be who they say they are.  
T = Tell an adult if you feel scared or uncomfortable

The Stay Safe section is linked to from all the community pages, and these messages are reinforced by the hosts as they encourage the right sort of behaviour from users. But it is important to note that although the SMART rules are widely used and recognised, several different versions of it are being used across the industry, which is likely to confuse some children.

## **12. The BBC's integrated complaints system**

Through audience testing, we have found that the best approach is to provide one single complaints system, as children seldom distinguish between criminal abuse, bullying or simple differences of opinion. Our trained staff then route messages as appropriate according to our referrals process below.

We are cautious about adding external complaint functions to this trusted "One-Stop-Shop" system as this may create more confusion for our audience (for example, which button do they press?), encourage misuse if directly routed to the police, or risk overloading police and other agencies with a large number of queries which their services are not designed or equipped to deal with. We also tread a careful line between making children aware of the potential threats of the online world and seeing to it that younger children aren't overly intimidated by perceived threats that actually don't relate to the activities they're involved in.

We need to maintain our reputation as a safe environment but are aware from audience feedback that too many on-screen caveats can be off-putting and could potentially drive some users to less reputable, unregulated sites.

## **13. Our internal referrals procedures.**

If we do receive a message from a user who requires further help, the following rapid referral procedure is followed, and a member of senior management is alerted on a formalised rota system.

The following are mandatory for instant referral

- If the user says they are going to kill themselves
- If they are reporting sexual abuse (online or real life) or physical abuse
- If they are going to run away
- If they have been left alone at home
- If they or a friend are going to meet someone from the Internet

Hosts can also escalate any other issue which poses an immediate danger or which they are unsure how to treat.

The senior manager then decides the next steps, including whether or not to refer the message to the NSPCC. (The hosts are able to contact the on-call senior manager at any time when the boards are open, between 9am and 9pm,

world of the playground. As well as supporting logic skills and empirical reasoning, we believe that, contrary to common perception, games do also encourage language and conversations skills either in-game or as part of playground chit-chat.

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However, we are acutely aware of the on-going debate about potential health risks of mobile telephony.

The 2000 Stewart report concluded that mobile phones did not appear to harm health, but recommended further research was carried out. In 2005, Sir William added that mobile phone use by children should be limited as a precaution - and that under eights should not use them at all.

Government guidance stresses that mobile phones should not be over-used by young children.

We therefore take the view that mobile services around the Cbeebies brand should be restricted to our Grown-ups service targeted at providing adult support and that, on CBBC, the emphasis should be on providing mobile



for online parental controls will require demonstrably low levels of over-blocking before an award is made and that reputable children's sites like CBBC will be an essential part of the testing process.

### **Self regulation and legislation**

The BBC is a long-standing, active and committed member of the Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet.

Over the last six years, the Task Force has produced a range of Good Practice Guidance for example on Chat, IM, web-based services, Search and Moderation. The guidance relies on the knowledge of experts from the children's charities, law enforcement, industry, government, regulators and others. (While the core guidance is aimed at reducing the risk of illegal behaviour, some areas also cover harmful and offensive content)

The BBC greatly values the Government's continuing support for the Home Office Task Force and the self-regulatory principles it embodies. In this area of rapid technological development, where timely and flexible responses are likely to be most effective, we believe that the voluntary collaborative approach, where service providers take into account the particular nature of their own services, has delivered real benefits. This is in part because the collaborative process itself encourages providers to share their own methods and practices with each other and with the relevant group as a whole, which often acts as a stimulus for robust debate, for self-examination and for improvement before the guidance is formally published.

However, we believe that there may be room for more work on how the Good Practice Guidance is publicised and in the evaluation of its practical effects.