

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/news/13798/government-publishes-online-safety-report>

Government publishes report on protecting kids online

Monitoring sex offenders is main focus

by Katie Scott published on 4 April 2008

The government has today published its recommendations to help protect children as they surf the Internet.

The Telegraph leaked one of the recommendations recently - that the 999 emergency details be displayed on all networking sites, but the report by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith actually takes this a step further.

The Government wants networking sites, such as Facebook, to add links to agencies including the NSPCC and the Samaritans.

However, the focus of the report is on how to prevent sex offenders getting any access to childrens' details or a way of contacting them in the first place.

The report urges the industry, including social networking sites and ISPs, to work together with law enforcement agencies, headed up by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

The Government proposes that the email addresses of registered child sex offenders will be passed by police to social networking websites, enabling these websites to block offenders from using their sites.

And sex offenders could face up to 5 years in prison if they fail to give police their email addresses or provide a false email address.

Educating parents is also a focus of the report and the first ever UK Social Networking Guidance package has been put together.

This will be available to everyone and offers advice for the industry, parents and children



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about how to stay safe online.

Jacqui Smith said in the report: "I want to see every child living their lives free from fear, whether they are meeting friends in a youth club or in a chat room".

"We have some of the strictest controls on sex offenders in the world to protect our children. We are working together with police, industry and charities to create a hostile environment for sex offenders on the internet and are determined to make it as hard for predators to strike online, as in the real world."

A final recommendation is that filtering software for home computers be awarded an official kitemark if it is deemed to be up to a necessary standard.

Chief executive of CEOP and The Association of Chief Police Officers' lead on child protection and combating child abuse on the internet Jim Gamble thinks the recommendation will have an impact:

"This has the real potential to accelerate online child protection and if adopted and applied should provide the vital reassurance that we all need - not least every parent, teacher and child protection team - that protecting the young and vulnerable is being taken seriously across the board."