Landmark consultation seeks views on major measures to protect children on social media, gaming platforms and AI chatbots

2.3.2026 - Liz Kendall, Bridget Phillipson | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Government launches a landmark consultation on UK children's digital wellbeing, covering social media age bans, curfews, AI chatbots and gaming.

- Expansive consultation opens to explore measures to keep children safe across the internet, from social media to gaming sites
- Consultation will consider whether to ban social media for children, effects of gaming, restriction of AI chatbots features, and overnight curfews
- Government will run real-world pilots with families and teenagers to examine how potential future social media restrictions could work in practice

Parents, guardians, and young people across the UK are being urged to shape the country's next steps on children's digital wellbeing, as the UK government opens the world's most ambitious consultation on social media today (Monday 2 March).

The consultation will gather insights from the public on how to keep children safe online across social media, AI chatbots and gaming platforms.

Millions of parents across the country worry about what social media is doing to their children's sleep, concentration and mental health. Many feel they are fighting a losing battle against platforms designed to keep children scrolling. They are grappling with how much screen time their children should have, when they should give them a phone, what they are seeing online, and the impact all of this is having. They worry about their children talking to chatbots as if they're real people and relying on their advice.

The Online Safety Act brought in strong protections, but there is growing agreement that more needs to be done. The contributions to this consultation will determine how the government will decide what that looks like.

Many parents and campaign groups have called for an outright ban on social media for under-16s. Others, including children's charities, have warned that a blanket ban could drive children towards less regulated corners of the internet or leave teenagers unprepared when they do come online. That is why this consultation looks beyond a ban and covers a full range of options, from curfews, to the impact of chatbots and gaming. It also asks the questions about how any new rules would work in practice to ensure they are effective.

Key questions the consultation will explore include some of the most talked-about potential changes:

- whether there should be a minimum age for social media, and if so, what age would be right
- whether platforms should be required to switch off addictive features that keep children hooked late into the night - like infinite scrolling and autoplay
- whether mandatory overnight curfews would help children sleep better and what age they should apply to

- whether children should be able to use AI chatbots without restriction
- how age verification enforcement should be strengthened
- how to help children and parents navigate the digital world and thrive online

Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said:

> The path to a good life is a great childhood, one full of love, learning and play. That applies just as much to the online world as it does to the real one.
>
> We know parents everywhere are grappling with how much screen time their children should have, when they should give them a phone, what they are seeing online, and the impact all of this is having.
>
> This is why we're asking children and parents to take part in this landmark consultation on how young people can thrive in an age of rapid technological change.
>
> Together, we will create a digital world that gives young people the childhood they deserve and prepares them for the future.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

> Technology is fundamentally changing childhood. Used well, it can open up new opportunities for learning, creativity and connection, but only if we get the balance right. That is why we want to hear directly from parents, teachers and young people about how we strike that balance and give children the very best childhood in a digital age.
>
> Today's consultation is a vital next step. For the first time, we will also publish guidance on healthy screen time for children aged 5 to 16, giving parents the practical tools to help their children build a healthier relationship with technology from an early age.
>
> Every child deserves a childhood - real experiences, real friendships, real opportunities. We are determined to make that a reality, both inside and outside the classroom.

The 3-month consultation is open to everyone with a view:

- parents
- carers
- young people
- those who work with children
- civil society organisations
- academics
- industry

Dedicated versions have been developed for young people and for parents and carers, making it easier for them to share their experiences and views.

The consultation will close on 26 May 2026.

The government will respond in the summer, acting swiftly on the evidence gathered.

The Prime Minister and Technology Secretary have announced new legislative powers that will allow the government to act at pace on the consultation's findings - meaning that once passed, ministers can move within months instead of waiting years for new legislation every time technology evolves.

The government will also work with parents to run live pilots with teenagers to test interventions including social media bans, overnight curfews, and daily screen time limits in practice, so decisions are grounded in real-world evidence as well as public views.

The public's views are essential to getting the next steps right. That's why alongside the formal consultation, the government is launching one of its most wide-ranging national conversations on a public issue in recent years. Over the coming 3 months, families, young people, and communities across the UK will be invited to share their views, including through dedicated children's and parent's versions of the consultation. The national conversation will include community events, MP-led local conversations, influencer roundtables, and engagement through schools and civil society organisations. A parallel academic panel will also assess the developing evidence base, drawing on international experiences from countries including Australia.

The consultation sits alongside the government's wider approach to online safety, including a new campaign and website that provides practical support that parents can use immediately, giving them the confidence they need to have conversations with their children about the content they see online.

Notes to editors

The consultation will be live on Monday 2 March at 10:30am.

Parents can find full guidance, conversation starters and safety advice on the 'Kids Online Safety' campaign website.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-consultation-seeks-views-on-major-measures-to-protect-children-on-social-media-gaming-platforms-and-ai-chatbots