

What do the Joint Committee recommendations mean for privacy and anonymity online?

Original Draft Bill

'A duty to have regard to the importance of protecting users from unwarranted infringements of privacy, when deciding on, and implementing, safety policies and procedures'

Implicit requirement for a wide expansion of age verification to prevent children from accessing harmful content

Main changes in the Joint Committee Report

Safeguarding privacy should be one of the online safety objectives Ofcom is required to ensure platforms are pursuing

Anonymity and end-to-end encryption should be recognised as specific risk factors that platforms must report on and for which mitigating measures are in place.

Explicit requirement for a wide expansion of age verification/assurance to prevent children from accessing harmful content

Age assurance technologies must meet minimum standards for preserving privacy

How platforms are collecting and using user data, including profiling and targeting, should be investigated by Ofcom and ICO

POSITIVE CHANGES FOR PRIVACY

- Safeguarding of privacy as a safety objective in itself rather than as a constraint on safety objectives
- Explicit recognition of the importance of protecting anonymity
- A path to greater action on platform business models, data tracking and profiling people based where they affect users' privacy and experiences of harm
- Proposal of minimum standards against which platform's use of technology can be measured rather than relying on platforms' own self-assessments.

QUESTIONS REMAINING

- Details of what platforms will be expected to do in order to achieve their safeguarding obligations are still not laid out
- Platform risk assessments should include how anonymity and end-to-end encryption on their services are promoting user safety, as well as the risks that might arise from their use