THE REALITY

One year on from the Online Safety Act's child safety protections

10,635 children in years 7-13 told us:

Pornography exposure has fallen but remains widespread

- **17%** of children have seen pornography – down by 25 percentage points from last year
- **50%** of repeat users watched pornography using a VPN

Children are being exposed to pornography at younger ages

- The average age of first exposure has fallen to **11.6 years old**
- Children first exposed to pornography **before age 12** are more likely to report a habit or addiction and lower wellbeing

Early exposure is more likely to lead to addiction and associated harms

- **36%** of repeat users report a pornography habit or addiction
- **20%** of children who have seen pornography have acted it out

Research shows the majority of pornography contains violence*

Children are experiencing harmful sexual behaviour and often lack confidence to report it

- **1 in 4** witness sexual texts or messages in school at least monthly
- **58%** would not feel confident to report experiencing sexual harassment to school staff

58% of children believe more should be done to prevent children viewing pornography

THE RESPONSE

Children are calling for stronger protection from online harms, better education, and trusted adults they can turn to. This requires a whole-community response involving parents, schools and children alike.

ENGAGE Parents

Parents/carers are a child's first educators, and the conversations that help protect children start early. They need practical guidance and support to help children navigate relationships and online harms — without pressure to have all the answers.

> *"We haven't had the same challenges with my child's smartphone use as other families I know, thanks to the tips from the Dignify parent workshop 2 years ago"*

EQUIP Schools

Schools are uniquely placed to reach every child with relationships education, and help keep them safe. They need training, time, and resources to do this effectively — so children can navigate an increasingly complex world.

98% of Year 9 students who took part in Dignify workshops said they were now more confident in identifying what healthy relationships look like.

EMPOWER Children

Children are not just recipients of protection; they are part of the solution. They need safe spaces and opportunities to develop their confidence, skills, and voice to shape healthier relationships and communities.

> *"The highlight was being part of something that can help make real change in the school community."*

Student feedback from the Dignify Ambassador Programme

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish clear government leadership on pornography-related harms
2. Strengthen enforcement of child-safety measures for evolving technologies
3. Make Relationships and Sex Education compulsory until age 18
4. Increase investment in preventative education and safeguarding
5. Ensure children's voices remain central to future online safety reforms

*Children's Commissioner for England, "A lot of it is actually just abuse": Young people and pornography (2023)