

Witness Name: Kate Davies

Statement No: 2

Exhibits: KD1 - KD58

Dated: 17 October 2025

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

MODULE 8

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF KATE DAVIES

I, Kate Davies of the Office of Communications ("Ofcom"), Riverside House, 2A Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HA, will say as follows:

1. I am giving this statement to correct an error in my first witness statement prepared for the inquiry, dated 17 July 2025 (INQ000587986).
2. At paragraph 78(b) of my previous statement, I said that *"In October/November 2021, four in five 12-15s claimed to have been exposed to potentially harmful content online within the previous 12 months (KD/29 - INQ000615301)"*. The statistic is taken from page 18 of Exhibit KD/29 (INQ000615301). However, this statistic does not relate to October/ November 2021, but to January/ February 2020. This is within the period defined by the inquiry as corresponding to the pandemic, but pre-dates the first lockdown.
3. We do not hold data from which it is possible to draw conclusions about a trend in children's exposure to potentially harmful content online between the three periods 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2019; 1 January 2020 to 28 June 2022; and 29 June 2022 to date. This is due to changes in methodology, survey vehicles, material changes to the questions being asked, and to the age of children interviewed.
4. I explain the differences in the methodology of our various surveys below. In each case, our figures about "potential harm" were derived from responses about individual potential harms which were shown to survey respondents, and which were then aggregated to provide an "any potential harm" figure.
 - a. In February-March 2019 and in January-February 2020, Ofcom carried out an online survey with children aged 12-15 about the types of potential harm they had encountered online in the previous year. Relevant data is in Exhibit KD/29 (INQ000615301). In my first witness statement at paragraph 78a, I gave the data from 2019: 79% said they had experienced any of the potential

harms asked about. In January-February 2020 there was a comparable figure, 81% (Exhibit KD/29 - INQ000615301, page 132), but this pre-dated the first lockdown.

- b. In 2021, Ofcom's survey vehicle in relation to online harms moved from the Internet users' experience of harms online survey, to the Online Experiences Tracker. The technical report of wave 1 of the Online Experiences Tracker, for which fieldwork was conducted between October-November 2021, can be seen at pages 266-278 of Exhibit KD/29 - INQ000615301. The age of children surveyed ranged from 13-17 (i.e. a different age group from that used previously), and responders were asked about experiences of potential online harm within the last 4 weeks (a different time period from that used previously). We also asked about a different set of potential harms than in the earlier work. This was because at this stage we were still learning about harms and how best to capture them in our questions. 65% of children aged 13-17 stated that they had seen or experienced any potential harm online within the last 4 weeks. This data point was not cited in the report at Exhibit KD/29, but has been extracted from the underlying data tables which were published on Ofcom's website on 31 May 2022.
- c. Separately, Ofcom's Children and Parents media use and attitudes report was published on 28 April 2021, with fieldwork having been carried out between October 2020-January 2021 (Exhibit KD/31 - INQ000551874). For this report, children between the ages of 12-15 were asked whether various negative experiences had ever happened to them online, to which 55% responded that they had experienced one or more. This survey asked about a smaller subset of potential harms. The period we asked about, ("ever happened") was also different from the surveys described above. These questions were removed from the survey following the 2020/2021 wave due to the set-up of the Online Experiences Tracker, and so no further data was gathered on this basis.
- d. Ofcom continued to carry out its Online Experiences Tracker, which provides data from October/November 2021, until the most recent wave in January 2025. However, it was not carried out on the same basis throughout the period. When the tracker began, the definitions of online harm which were ultimately given in the Online Safety Act had not yet been established. We changed the survey over time to correspond better with the definitions used in the Online Safety Act. Consequently, data from within the period 1 January 2020 to 28 June 2022 is not comparable to data from after 28 June 2022.

Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 17 October 2025