

Press Release: 18 February 2008

UK content providers make new media literacy commitment



Today the UK's major content providers launch a set of good practice principles for the provision of information about audiovisual content to consumers.

In a fast changing media world, research shows¹ that consumers, particularly parents, want clear information about the content they and their children can view or access, whether it is online, on a mobile phone or on television. Building on existing good practice, these principles promote common sense, simplicity and transparency to ensure that all users are empowered to make safe and informed choices about commercially provided content.

The principles relate to content that may be unsuitable for children and young people or which some members of the public may find offensive. While the format of the information provided may vary from platform to platform, content providers are committed to ensuring that it is easy to use and understand, enables the user to make informed choices, uses plain and consistent language and is practical for the medium in which it is made available.

Content providers have worked together for the last year to develop these common good practice principles. Facilitated by the Broadband Stakeholder Group, the government's advisory body on broadband, today's signatories to the principles include:

- **AOL**
- **BBC**
- **Bebo**
- **BT**
- **Channel 4**
- **Five**
- **Google**
- **ITV**
- **Microsoft**
- **Mobile Broadband Group** (represents Orange, O2, 3, T-Mobile, Vodafone and Virgin Mobile)
- **Teacher's TV**
- **Virgin Media**
- **Yahoo!**
- **ATVOD** (Association for Television On Demand)
- **BBFC** (British Board of Film Classification)
- **FOSI** (Family Online Safety Institute)

¹ Ofcom Programme Information Research, 6 September 2006. See Notes to Editors.

Ed Richards, Chief Executive of Ofcom responded to the launch of the principles, stating: “Ofcom is pleased that the industry has come together to address the challenge of providing consumers with content information which is appropriate for the evolving media landscape. Research has shown that people want clear and consistent information about content and we think that these good practice principles represent a positive step forward.”

Antony Walker, CEO of the Broadband Stakeholder Group says: “Consumers want clear information to help them make more informed choices. These principles set out the underlying approach that content providers are taking so that consumers get the information they need, and in a way that makes sense to them across different media platforms. We hope today’s launch will encourage other players in the audiovisual industry to sign up to this important cross-industry initiative.

“These landmark principles demonstrate that as audiovisual content continues to evolve, content providers are committed to working together to promote and enable media literacy. The principles will be reviewed in 2009 by the BSG to assess their impact and effectiveness.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About the good practice principles

A cross-industry working group, facilitated by the Broadband Stakeholder Group, developed the good practice principles on audiovisual content information. The full text of the principles, alongside further detail on the context in which these principles were developed is available at:

www.audiovisualcontent.org

The full document sets out the principles content providers will use to guide their approach to providing content information and also explains the context in which these principles are applied. The good practice principles apply only to content that is commercially produced or acquired. They do not apply to user-generated content, advertising or unlawful material, which are managed by other mechanisms.

Content providers have agreed a shared set of principles for audiovisual content, but the way in which content information is given may differ due to a variety of factors, such as to the media platform used and the context in which the content is made available.

About the Broadband Stakeholder Group

The BSG was established as a cross-sector government advisory group in 2001 to help the UK lead the G7 in broadband penetration and connectivity. It provides a neutral forum for collaboration between organisations across the converging

broadband value-chain with the ultimate aim of helping to create a strong and competitive UK knowledge economy.

It aims to be a critical friend of government and the regulator, and comprises companies from the telecoms and technology sectors through to content providers and rights holders. It also has direct representation from government departments and Ofcom. It is funded through a combination of government funding and industry sponsorship.

The BSG focuses on strategic, medium- to long-term challenges, which have latterly included next generation access networks, predicting future bandwidth requirements, and digital inclusion.

Ofcom Programme Information Research

This research can be accessed in full at:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/pirinvestigation/pirreport.pdf

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