

Submission to Parliament inquiry into age verification law changes .

Access and exposure to ADULT pornography to under 18 yr olds is really really worrying. For younger children these images can haunt them and make them fearful of sexual relations, and/ or just completely disturb them as they do not understand these images they have seen and heard.

For older children, and I mean up to age 18 , the exposure will be harmful to them in terms of their natural healthy development. Innocent 'normal' young people are entitled to a developmental path of being able to navigate their way with some hopefully healthy sex education behind them, but throw in some hard core porn and you have a completely different result. An inappropriate and unrealistic set of expectations result ( for themselves as well as their partner) which then can lead to traumatic / and or unsuccessful first intimate/ sexual experiences. These experiences of intimacy are ideally associated with genuine connection, trust and feelings of love and sexual attraction. But when that goes wrong may then set them off on a path of discomfort and lack of trust in intimate relationships at a critical time in their forming their identity in young adulthood. According to the foundations of psychology, Erikson's model of developmental theory , this is the exact time when they are meant to be having formative healthy adult relationships and choosing partners.. etc ..

In one instance I know of, as a school counsellor, a 16 yr old girl from a dysfunctional, marginalised and emotionally neglectful family presented with a sexual addiction. Access to pornographic material contributed negatively to an already complex and serious mental health problem.

Hence, the implementation of barriers to protect under age access to pornography is crucial. The images seen on internet are in a totally different category to the old nude magazines that were once kept under the bed of adolescents. What is available now on internet makes those magazines seem completely innocent in comparison ! So if you are about 40 or older, don't confuse this with what your experiences of pornography were !

October 3 2019