



The Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London SW1A 2BQ

15 July 2019

**Re: BBFC Age Verification Privacy Certification Scheme**

Dear Secretary of State,

We write to ask you to legislate without delay to place a statutory requirement on the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) to make their privacy certification scheme for age verification providers mandatory. Legislation is also needed to grant the BBFC powers to require compliance reports and penalise non-compliant providers.

As presently constituted, the BBFC certification scheme will be a disaster. Our analysis report, attached, shows that rather than setting out objective privacy safeguards to which companies must adhere, the scheme allows companies to set their own rules and then demonstrate that these are being followed. There are no penalties for providers which sign up to the standard and then fail to meet its requirements.

The broadly-drafted, voluntary scheme encourages a race to the bottom on privacy protection. It provides no consistent guarantees for consumers about how their personal data will be safeguarded and puts millions of British citizens at serious risk of fraud, blackmail or devastating sexual exposure.

The BBFC standard was only published in April. Some age verification providers have admitted that they are not ready. Others have stated that for commercial reasons they will not engage with the scheme. This means that the bureaucratic delay to age verification's roll-out can now be turned to advantage. The Government needs to use this delay to introduce legislation, or at the least issue guidance under section 27 of the Digital Economy Act 2017, that will ensure the privacy and security of online users is protected.

We welcome the opportunity to bring this issue to your attention and await your response.

Yours sincerely,

**Jim Killock**  
Executive Director  
Open Rights Group

Enc.

Cc Amelia Erratt, Head of Age-Verification, British Board of Film Classification