

MP says parents should check their children's messages

Interview by Chris Smith, words by Del Crookes Newsbeat reporters 22 Jan 2013

Parents should be able to (1)_____ their children's online activity, the government's adviser on childhood says.

Claire Perry says the dangers of being on the internet (2)_____ adults should not feel bad about doing it.

The Conservative MP denies it is (3)_____ and says she regularly has conversations with her daughter.

"I'm not suggesting that if her phone was on the kitchen table I would feel the need to (4)_____ it. That's like reading somebody's diary," she said.

In an interview with Newsbeat, she added; "With my 13-year-old, I want to have a conversation with her about her (5)_____, and say, 'Look. If there is something you're a little bit unsure of, let me see it'."

'Inappropriate material'

The Conservative MP for Devizes was made the government's adviser on the sexualisation and commercialisation of childhood in December 2012.

Among a series of (6)_____ put forward by the 48-year-old are age (7)_____ for sexually provocative music videos, restrictions on access to so-called lads' mags, labelling on (8)_____ photos in magazines and internet safety classes in schools.

She also thinks parents should (9)_____ the idea that children have the right to keep online chats, text messages, tweets and Facebook conversations private.

"This is an uncomfortable area for people to talk about," she said.

"I've been (10)_____ for more family-friendly access to the internet, so that inappropriate material - whether it's hardcore porn or pro-anorexia sites or pro-suicide sites - are filtered in the home.

"Parents seem to feel very helpless about this. I think that's a concern. We don't feel helpless about teaching our kids about road safety or trying to get them to eat healthily. Somehow the technology has terrified us.

"Parents are paying for these mobile contracts. We've given the kids this power and this responsibility for free. I think we have a responsibility to get involved."

Claire Perry's comments have come in for criticism from Radio 1 listeners.

Writing on Twitter, Liam said: "We deserve privacy. Would they let us read their messages? If they want us to act like adults, they need to treat us like it."

And Jodie said: "How can you expect children to respect the privacy of others when they see adults snooping through their own things?"

On Newsbeat's Facebook page, Janine Spencer wrote: "I believe that parents should only (11)_____ young children's privacy. Teens should know what is right and wrong on the internet and what they should and shouldn't be doing. It's about (12)_____."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/21143662/mp-says-parents-should-check-their-childrens-messages>