

**BYRON REVIEW URGES GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY AND PARENTS TO  
WORK TOGETHER TO HELP MAKE CHILDREN SAFER IN THE DIGITAL  
WORLD**

A comprehensive package of measures to help children and young people make the most of the internet and video games, while protecting them from harmful and inappropriate material was launched today with the publication of the eagerly anticipated Byron Review into Children and New Technology.

In launching her independent Report today, *Safer Children in a Digital World*, Dr Tanya Byron, a clinical psychologist and mother of two, set out an ambitious action plan for Government, industry and families to work together to support children's safety online and to reduce access to adult video games.

Since being asked by the Prime Minister in September 2007 to lead an independent review, Dr Byron has engaged in a rigorous process and has been widely complimented for setting new standards in engagement with the public and industry on such an important debate. As a result of these efforts, Dr Byron has been able to set out a detailed analysis of the evidence of the risks and benefits of new technologies, examine this evidence against child and brain development theory and research and provide a comprehensive evaluation of the work already being done to protect children when online or playing video games.

Dr Byron concludes that while new technologies bring incredible opportunities to children and young people, parent's general lack of confidence and awareness is leaving children vulnerable to risks within their digital worlds. Many parents seem to believe that when their child is online it is similar to them watching television – Dr Byron is keen to emphasise that in fact it is more like opening the front door and letting your child go outside to play, unsupervised. Digital world risks are similar to real world risks but can be enhanced by the anonymity and ubiquity that the online space brings.

In order to improve children's on-line safety, Dr Byron makes a number of ground breaking recommendations including:

- The creation of a new **UK Council for Child Internet Safety**, established by and reporting to the Prime Minister, and including representation from across Government, industry, children's charities and other key stakeholders including children, young people and parent panels.
- **Challenging industry** to take greater responsibility in supporting families through: establishing transparent and independently monitored codes of practice on areas such as user generated content; improving access to parental control software and safe search features; and better regulation of online advertising.
- Kick starting a comprehensive **public information and awareness campaign** on child internet safety across Government and industry, and which includes an authoritative 'one stop shop' on child internet safety.
- Setting in place **sustainable education** and children's service initiatives to improve the skills of children and their parents around e-safety.

On video games, Dr Byron recommends a range of high profile and targeted efforts to help inform parents what games are right for their children, such as:

- Reforming the **classification system** for rating video games with one set of symbols on the front of all boxes which are the same as those for film.

- Lowering the **statutory requirement to classify video games to 12+**, so that it is the same as film classification and easier for parents to understand.
- Clear and consistent **guidance for industry** on how games should be advertised.
- Challenging industry to provide sustained and high profile efforts to **increase parents understanding** of age ratings and improved parental controls.

Dr Byron said:

“The internet and video games are now very much a part of growing up and offer unprecedented opportunities to learn, develop and have fun. However, with new opportunities come potential risks. My recommendations will help children and young people make the most of what all digital and interactive technologies can offer, while enabling them and their parents to navigate all these new media waters safely and with the knowledge that more is being done by government and the internet and video game industries to help and support them.

“We live in an increasingly risk averse culture where we are limiting our children’s out of home experiences because of fear of harm. However, risk taking is a developmental imperative of childhood - young people and children will always want to explore boundaries by taking risks, and they will sometimes play this out, at home, in the digital world with many parents unaware of this. In the same way that we teach our children how to manage ‘real world’ risks, for example crossing roads, in stages and with rules, supervision and monitoring that changes as they learn and develop their independence, we need to engage with children as they develop and explore their online and gaming worlds.

“This is also about overcoming the generational ‘digital divide’ where parents do not feel equipped to help their children because they didn’t grow up with these sophisticated technologies themselves and therefore don’t understand them; this can lead to fear and a sense of helplessness. This is compounded by children and young people’s greater skill and confidence in using new technology.

“But by putting in place the right roles and support for children, young people and families we can reduce much of the anxiety that currently exists by taking a joint and shared responsibility with everyone – industries, government, education, child welfare organisations and law enforcement - playing their part.

A useful way for us all to think about this is to look at how we protect children in places of benefit and risk in the real (offline) world: public swimming pools. Here there are safety signs and information; shallow as well as deep ends; swimming aids and lifeguards; doors, locks and alarms. However children will sometimes take risks and jump into waters too deep for them or want to climb walls and get through locked doors – therefore we also teach them how to swim. We must adopt the same combination of approaches in order to enable our children and young people to navigate these exciting digital waters while supporting and empowering them to do so safely.”

### **Editors note**

Copies of the Byron Review can be downloaded from:  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview)

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### **Background to the Byron Review**

In September 2007, the Prime Minister asked Dr Tanya Byron to lead an independent review to help parents and their children get the most from new technologies while protecting children from inappropriate or harmful material. The focus was on the internet and video games.

The objectives of the Review were:

- To undertake a review of the evidence on risks to children's safety and wellbeing of exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet and in video games.
- To assess the effectiveness and adequacy of existing measures to help prevent children from being exposed to such material and help parents understand and manage the risks of access to inappropriate content, and to make recommendations for improvements or additional action.

The Review has been jointly sponsored by and reports to the Secretaries of State for Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

In gathering the evidence for the Review, Dr Byron undertook the following initiatives:

- An open Call for Evidence ran from 9 October to 30 November 2007. It received over 300 responses from key industry, third sector and individual stakeholders.
- A Children and Young People's Call for Evidence ran from 24 October to 17 December 2007. Received over 350 responses. This was complemented by engagement with children and young people through the Review's website and profiles on social networking sites.
- Holding meetings with over 100 stakeholders, including trips to the United States and Ireland to meet with some of the major internet and video games industry players and public and third sector bodies.
- An interim conference on 31 January 2008, attended by over 100 key stakeholders, to discuss the implications of the evidence and her emerging thinking.
- The commissioning of qualitative research involving 48 parents and 42 children and young people in a series of focus groups across the UK, segmented by age of child, socio-economic status, geographical location and level of concern about the internet and video games.
- Academic Reviews of the literature on media effects, child development, and brain development commissioned from three leading academics. These were discussed at three workshops with key academic commentators.
- Children and Young People submit 'NetSmart' and 'GameSmart' text, designs and multi media short projects for inclusion in the final report – winning designers help Dr Byron launch the Review on 27<sup>th</sup> March.

[Biography for Dr Tanya Byron](#)



Tanya did her first degree in psychology at York, her clinical psychology Masters training at UCL and her doctorate (on the treatment of cocaine, amphetamine and ecstasy misusers) between University College Hospital and Surrey. She has worked in the NHS for 18 years working in Drug Dependency, HIV/AIDS and sexual health, adult mental health and eating disorders services. She was the Consultant of an in patient unit for 12 - 16 year olds with severe mental health problems and child protection issues. Tanya now works one clinical day a week as a Consultant in child and adolescent mental health.

Tanya also presents television programmes on child behaviour, science and current affairs (Little Angels; Teen Angels; House of Tiny Tearaways; Panorama; How to Improve Your Memory - with Professor Robert Winston, BBC TV). She has a new series about human behaviour (Am I Normal?) coming onto BBC2 in spring 2008. Tanya also writes with Jennifer Saunders (The Life and Times of Vivienne Vyle).

Tanya has published three books on child behaviour and has recently published Your Child Month by Month – a guide to child development and the early years with Dorling Kindersley. In addition Tanya writes a weekly column for the Times newspaper and for several magazines.

Tanya is married to the actor Bruce Byron and is mother to Lily (12) and Jack (10).

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