

## EU SNS Safer Social Networking Principles Self-declaration Form

*In the interests of transparency, providers supporting the EU Safer Social Networking Principles agree to self-declare how they have considered the Principles in relation to the Social Networking Services they offer, using the form below.*

### 1. About the Social Networking Service(s)

The following is a brief outline of Yahoo! in Europe, including a short description of the services it offers that fall into the category of “social networking” as outlined in the Principles.

Yahoo! is a leading global internet brand and one of the most trafficked internet destinations worldwide. Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, and with its European HQ in Switzerland, Yahoo!'s global network includes 25 world properties and is available in 13 languages. Yahoo! provides online products and services, offering a variety of services essential to users' life with 'social networking' features.

This self-declaration relates to Yahoo! Answers, a community-based knowledge engine where people ask each other questions on a range of topics, and receive answers by sharing facts, opinions, and personal experiences. Yahoo! Answers is available in many markets around the world including 5 EU markets in local languages – UK & Ireland, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. Examples given in this document are drawn from the UK & Ireland service - <http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/>.

### 2. How has the company considered these services in relation to the Principles?

The following is an outline of how Yahoo! in Europe has considered the EU Safer Social Networking Principles with respect to Yahoo! Answers. This section will make reference to the recommendations made in the Principles document, where they are applicable and outline how they are applied.

#### **Principle 1: Raise awareness of safety education messages and acceptable use policies to users, parents, teachers and carers in a prominent, clear and age-appropriate manner**

##### **Terms of use and community guidelines**

In order to create a Yahoo! Answers account, a user must first have obtained a Yahoo! ID. In doing so, users commit to general terms of service which set out conditions of use for all Yahoo! services, including Flickr. They also set out the consequences of a user breaching the terms of service, including withdrawal of their access to a particular service or, in some cases, the deletion of their Yahoo! ID (i.e.: withdrawing access to all Yahoo! services).

In addition, Yahoo! has developed Community Guidelines which set out standards of behaviour for community-based services (see:

[http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/keeping\\_safe/guidelines.html](http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/keeping_safe/guidelines.html)). These are supplemented with additional guidelines for Yahoo! Answers – e.g.: [http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/info/community\\_guidelines](http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/info/community_guidelines) explaining the dos and don'ts for users including what could happen if they breach the guidelines. They are widely available via a link in the page footer of every page on Yahoo! Answers and are written in language that is accessible to all users, including children. Users are asked to commit to these guidelines when creating for a Yahoo! Answers account.

### **Safety education and messaging**

Yahoo! Answers is one of a number of services Yahoo! offers to its users. Many of these services have similar features and, where safety information is common to several services, we provide it in central locations on the Yahoo! portal (and outside the terms of service) and in local languages:

- Dedicated guidance for parents and carers, including teachers prominently shown within Yahoo! Help Central. The UK examples can be found at: [http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/parents\\_and\\_carers/](http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/parents_and_carers/). This is linked from the Help home page.
- Dedicated guidance for children and young users prominently shown within Yahoo! Help Central. The UK example can be found at: [http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/young\\_users/](http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/young_users/). This is linked from the Help home page.
- Information about direct and indirect support and advice from third party providers specifically targeted at children (e.g.: [http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/young\\_users/useful\\_resources.html](http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/young_users/useful_resources.html)).
- Information about direct and indirect support and advice from third party providers specifically targeted at parents, carers and teachers (e.g.: [http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/parents\\_and\\_carers/useful\\_resources.html](http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/safety/parents_and_carers/useful_resources.html)). This includes materials that support dialogue, trust and involvement between parents and children about responsible use of the internet.
- Specific guidance for users on privacy and the posting of information and content on user generated services in the Yahoo! Privacy Policy (e.g.: <http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/uk/yahoo/>)

Additional information is provided as part of the Yahoo! Answers service itself (and outside the terms of service):

- Permanent link on all Yahoo! Answers pages to Yahoo! Answers Community Guidelines - [http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/info/community\\_guidelines](http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/info/community_guidelines)
- Permanent footer on all Yahoo! Answers pages links to Safety Tips – e.g.: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/answers/safety/> - with easy-to-understand advice about how to use Yahoo! Answers safely and responsibly. These tips include advice for parents.
- Yahoo! Answers has dedicated Help pages, which includes safety information - e.g.: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/answers/>
- The Yahoo! Answers Blog – e.g.: <http://www.yanswersbloguk.com/> - is also used by community managers to share with users advice and articles about online safety and responsible use of Yahoo! Answers
- Permanent link on all Yahoo! Answers pages to safety information provided in Yahoo! Help Central. Users are directed to the advice that is most relevant to them (e.g.: users signed in under German terms of service are directed to safety information provided by Yahoo! Deutschland in German).

Yahoo! Answers is primarily designed for adult users but all Yahoo! safety information is written in accessible language so that it is understandable by all users, including children.

### **Community management**

Yahoo! Answers has “community-managers”. These are staff members who engage with the community to promulgate and encourage respect for the standards of behaviour set out in the community guidelines. This helps build a community based on shared values and attitudes. It also promotes engagement and encourages users to make quality contributions to their community both in terms of the content they share, and their treatment of others. Community managers also help users by participating in the Forum and drafting Blog postings.

## **Principle 2: Work towards ensuring that services are age-appropriate for the intended audience**

### **Age requirement**

- The minimum registered age<sup>1</sup> requirement to create a Yahoo! Answers account (which enables users to ask and answer questions in Yahoo! Answers) is 13 years. This is prominently stated in the Yahoo! Answers Community Guidelines.
- Where a young user is found to have lied about their age and breached Yahoo! terms of service, customer care will delete their profile.

### **Product features**

Certain measures are deployed to protect young users from inappropriate content and contact:

- Minimum ages apply to Yahoo! Answers (as noted above) and technical blocks are in place to prevent users with a registered age of less than 13 years from creating a Yahoo! Answers account.
- Yahoo! Answers is intended to be suitable for audiences of all ages and, accordingly, content is not labelled. Users are provided with further advice on what content is or is not acceptable on Yahoo! Answers in Help pages – e.g.: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/answers/abuse/>.

Note: All content on Yahoo! Answers is publicly accessible, including to users who do not have a Yahoo! Answers account or a Yahoo! ID.

### **Other features**

- Advice to parents (noted above) provides information to parents about other tools (such as parental controls) which they can use to supplement safety features provided by Yahoo!

Note: Yahoo! Answers does not provide tools which allow parents to control their children’s accounts. Yahoo! Answers is a text-based service and does not contain any images or audiovisual content.

---

<sup>1</sup> Registered age is the age the user declared when creating his/her Yahoo! ID.

## **Principle 3: Empower users through tools and technology**

### **Profiles**

- Yahoo! users can only create a Yahoo! Answers account if they have a registered age of over 13 years.
- Users may create an online identity or nickname rather than use their real identities.
- Sharing Messenger ID and email address is optional. Users can choose to leave this field blank.
- Yahoo! Answers profiles are not full profiles in the way other social network profiles are designed to represent the user's identity. They are akin to 'user cards', merely aggregating the public data associated with the user and their actions on Yahoo! Answers such as asking and answering. They contain a limited number of fields.
- UK Home Office Task Force good practice on social networking determined the risk to 13-18s from this type of profile to be low and Yahoo!, along with other providers, decided to permit all these 'user cards' to be public by default.
- Yahoo! Answers users cannot search for other users on this service.
- Profiles include a summary of the user's activity on Yahoo! Answers – i.e.: list of questions they have asked and answered and a list of their contacts. Users can choose to share this information with all users or only their chosen contacts.
- Users can delete their open questions, request deletion of resolved ones and anonymise information in their Yahoo! Answers profile at any time.

Note: Users are required to complete a more detailed registration form when creating their Yahoo! ID but this is independent of the profile a user creates for a particular service, including Yahoo! Answers. Users are given the option of using their registration name for their profile but can change it to a nickname if they wish.

### **User-initiated tools**

- Users can send and receive invitations to connect with other users on Yahoo! Answers. Users can decline or ignore invitations. They can also block or 'ignore' another user and delete users from their contacts list if they accept an invitation and change their mind afterwards.
- Users can access and amend their profile at any time via the "My Activity" link on the home page of Yahoo! Answers. Users can also amend their privacy settings to decide who can see the summary of their activity on Yahoo! Answers (i.e.: all Yahoo! Answers users or only their chosen contacts).
- If a user blocks another user, the blocked user cannot add him/her as a contact.

### **Reporting abuse**

- See comments on Principle 4 below.

### **Educating parents**

- See comments on Principle 1 above.

#### **Principle 4: Provide easy-to-use mechanisms to report conduct or content that violates the terms of service**

Yahoo! Answers provides users with a number of easy-to-use and prominently-placed tools to make reports to customer care:

- There is a permanent and prominent report abuse link on every Yahoo! Answers question page which links to a “report abuse” form. Users can report a range of terms of service violations via this link.
- There is also a prominent “flag this question” link alongside every question on Yahoo! Answers which allows users to report an image that may breach terms of service and require review by Yahoo! Answers staff.
- Yahoo! Answers Help pages also contain information about how to report abuse – e.g.: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/answers/abuse/>. There is a permanent link to the Help pages at the head of all pages on Yahoo! Answers.
- Yahoo! Answers has community moderation. Community moderation empowers reliable Yahoo! Answers users to help remove inappropriate questions and answers more quickly. Members of the community who reliably identify and report questions and answers have more influence than others. If a question or answer is reported by one or more reliable users, it will be removed. How this works is explained to users in the Help pages – e.g.: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/uk/yahoo/answers/moderation/>.

In all cases, users are guided on what information to provide with their report and/or what steps they can take to resolve the matter themselves. The report abuse form is easy to understand by all users, including children.

Users receive an on-screen notification of their report. Abuse reports from users are acted upon in a timely way and are typically resolved within 48 hours. More complex reports generally require further investigation and may take longer to resolve.

#### **Principle 5: Respond to notifications of illegal content or conduct**

##### **Reports about content or conduct**

- Yahoo! has in place clear procedures to handle complaints about content or conduct which breaches terms of service. These are typically handled by customer care agents.
- Serious abuses of a Yahoo! service may be escalated internally to a dedicated team within the Legal group which provides professional support and advice on more complex matters and determines an appropriate response.
- Abuse reports from users are acted upon in a timely way and are typically resolved within 48 hours. More complex reports generally require further investigation and may take longer to resolve.

- Users are advised to contact the emergency services if there is an immediate threat to life.

#### **Liaison with law enforcement**

- Yahoo! has dedicated points of contact for law enforcement agencies in Europe and processes to receive and process lawful requests for assistance. These include arrangements to handle urgent matters out of hours.
- Where reporting mechanisms exist, Yahoo!'s Legal team has processes in place to pass on suspected illegal content or reports of suspected grooming of minors to the relevant enforcement body.

#### **Liaison with other agencies**

- In all European markets, Yahoo! supports the local hotline (INHOPE member) responsible for handling reports about images of child sexual abuse.
- Yahoo! provides links to such organizations in its Help Central pages (see comments on Principle 1 above).

### **Principle 6: Enable and encourage users to employ a safe approach to personal information and privacy**

- Users access their account information via a "My Activity" link on all Yahoo! Answers pages via the header. This allows users to easily view their profile and privacy settings. Users can edit their profile and change their privacy settings at any time via this link.
- A permanent "Privacy" link at the foot of every page on Yahoo! Answers links to a dedicated Privacy Centre for each market. This outlines the practical steps users can take to manage their privacy and personal information. It also includes advice on posting information about themselves and content to Yahoo!'s networking services such as Yahoo! Answers.
- It is clear to users when completing their profile what content will be public.
- This information is provided in accessible and easy-to-understand language for all users.

### **Principle 7: Assess the means for reviewing illegal or prohibited content/conduct**

See comments on Principle 1, Principle 3 and Principle 5 above.

### **3. Other information**

This section provides an outline of any other information that is relevant with regards how the company has considered the Principles.

Yahoo! is in the process of launching locally relevant versions of Yahoo! Safely sites containing online safety information for teens and parents, as well as safety guides for all Yahoo! products. The UK version of this site is available at <http://uk.safely.yahoo.com/> and via a permanent link at the foot of the Yahoo! UK & Ireland front page. The next phase of this programme will provide links from product pages in individual markets to the relevant local safety site.

**This information can be published:** Yes