

Filtering Advice for Website Owners

The four largest Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the UK now offer their customers the option of filters that, when switched on, prevent some types of content and websites from being accessed from any device.

Although all the ISP systems are slightly different, they all have a similar way of assessing websites either by the type of content they have (for example, pornography, violence, gambling) or by the type of website they are (for example, forums, social media or gaming). Each website is given a category by the ISP and customers can opt to prevent access to websites that fall into a particular category.

Whilst network filters can offer parents a really useful way of managing the websites their children can access, it's important to raise awareness of the process of categorising and filtering and ensure websites aren't inadvertently blocked. There are four broad circumstances:

- The website may be categorised and filtered as expected – an example of this might include a soft porn site being filtered when a customer switches on filtering.
- The website may be categorised incorrectly and may be filtered by mistake – an example of this may be a website with a misleading name being accidentally categorised (e.g. Naked Wines)
- The website may be correctly categorised, however the customer may not have anticipated the impact of the filtering system – an example of this may be, a customer may choose to filter out 'social media' without realising this will also block forums and social media associated with any number of websites. As an example, this might filter advice and information forums or other self-help communities.
- The website may be correctly categorised, the customer may have anticipated correctly the impact, but the website owner may not realise that their site will be blocked if filters are selected

Internet Matters offers website owners the opportunity to understand the way they have been categorised to understand how the use of filters across the four ISP's may affect the opportunity for people to access their website. In particular, we want to ensure the filtering is not having an adverse impact on people accessing support and information, and as such the ISPs have established a means for a website owner to check their domains and URL's and raise any concern regarding how a site might be filtered.

If you're an individual site owner and you would like to check the status of your site across BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media's network filter settings; you can email us at: report@internetmatters.org.

Please include the URL of your site, your name and company name, if relevant. If you run forums or social media sites you may want to request a check of these URL's separately as well as your domain name.

Internet Matters will then liaise with the four ISP's to establish the status of your site and will email you with the details of your site's classification with the four ISPs.