

Ofcom submission to the Independent Expert Commission on the Safety of Children and Young People in Digital Environments regarding the 4th hearing on the topic of "International Perspectives and EU Developments"

Ofcom's role

Ofcom is the United Kingdom's (UK) independent communications regulator, overseeing sectors including fixed-line and mobile telecoms, the airwaves on which wireless devices operate, post, and TV and radio broadcasting. We are also the regulator for online safety, with a responsibility to help make online services safer for the people who use them.

We are grateful for the request to provide input into the Independent Expert Commission on the Safety of Children and Young People in Digital Environment's fourth hearing. The services that we regulate, as well as the safety risks that we seek to protect individuals from, are global in nature. We see an important opportunity for regulators and relevant organisations across countries and regions to share experience, expertise, and evidence as we collectively drive improvements in online safety.

The Online Safety Act and Ofcom's recent work

The UK's Online Safety Act received Royal Assent in October 2023. Services that fall into scope of the Act – user to user services, search services, and pornographic services - have to follow certain rules as set out in UK law, including protecting users from illegal content and activity online, as well as protecting children from harmful content. These kinds of content are defined in UK law.

Ofcom's role is to implement the Online Safety Act, and ensure regulated online services have systems and processes in place to protect users from illegal content and children from harmful content. We are not able to directly investigate individual content complaints. Our statutory powers do not allow us to rule on the legality of particular pieces of content or instruct firms to remove specific content or take down specific accounts

In 2025, we made significant progress in implementing the Online Safety Act. Ensuring service providers undertake a high-quality risk assessment to assess the risk their service poses regarding the specific harms outlined in the Act is one of our strategic objectives. To assist services with this, we have published detailed guidance on our understanding of how risk manifests online in our [illegal harms](#) register of risks and [protection of children](#) register of risks.

We completed our [Illegal Harms](#) and [Protection of Children](#) codes and guidance, including on implementing [highly effective age assurance](#) for pornography and other content that is harmful to children, and started driving compliance with these core requirements. We also delivered other key building blocks of the Online Safety regime, including those relating to setting up our fees, super-complaints, and transparency reporting functions.

However, [implementation](#) of the Online Safety Act is ongoing and in 2026, we are focussing on publishing the register of categorised services and consulting on the additional duties, plus statutory

reports on protection of children and updates to reflect changes to priority offences (once passed into law). We are working to deliver this final implementation phase as quickly as possible.

To assist the Expert Commission in its work, we would like to signpost the following Ofcom publications which set out the work we have undertaken to operationalise the OSA. We hope the following publications are useful in setting out our ongoing work and explaining what we have learnt so far from implementation:

Implementing the Act

- [Keep underage children off your platforms, Ofcom tells tech firms](#) (12 March 2026)
- [Online safety industry bulletin - December 2025](#) (9 December 2025)
- [Online Safety in 2025: Summary of the technology sectors response to online safety rules](#) (4 December 2025)
- [Important dates for Online Safety compliance](#) (17 October 2024)
- [Ofcom's approach to implementing the Online Safety Act](#) (26 October 2023)

Protection of Children

- [Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2025](#) (7 May 2025)
- [Statement: Protecting children from harms online](#) (24 April 2025)
- [Guidance on highly effective age assurance part 3 guidance](#) (24 April 2025)

Illegal harms

- [Statement: Protecting people from illegal harms online](#) (16 December 2024)

Enforcement

Ofcom has opened investigations under the OSA into over 90 services. All details of our enforcement cases can be found on our website. Some recent cases likely to be relevant to the Expert Commission are:

- [Ofcom investigates online forums hosting image-based sexual abuse](#) (6 March 2026)
- [Ofcom fines porn company £1.35m for not having age checks](#) (23 February 2026)
- [Ofcom fines porn company £800,000 for failing to introduce age checks](#) (12 February 2026)
- [Enforcement Programme to protect children from encountering pornographic content through the use of age assurance](#) (16 January 2025)
- [Investigation into X Internet Unlimited Company and its compliance with duties to protect its users from illegal content and child users from harmful content](#) (12 January 2026)
- [Ofcom launches investigation into X over Grok sexualised imagery](#) (12 January 2026)

Risk assessment

- [Online Safety Risk Assessments - Year one](#) (4 December 2025)