

Reference: 1979907

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

28 April 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about the online safety supervision team.

We received this request on 1 April 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the FOI Act”).

Your request and our response

1. How many staff are assigned to the taskforce responsible for ‘small but risky’ online platforms within Ofcom’s supervision team, on a) a full-time basis b) a part-time basis (and for how many hours).

The taskforce is resourced strategically to ensure delivery of work tackling Small But Risky Services. Staffing levels within the taskforce vary according to operational needs, with staff drawn from teams across Ofcom, Therefore it is not possible to provide a specific figure as requested.

2. The date on which the ‘small but risky’ taskforce began its work.

The Small But Risky Services taskforce began its work in the Summer of 2024.

3. What the remit of this taskforce is and how ‘small but risky’ has been defined for these purposes.

The taskforce’s focus is bringing smaller, riskier services into compliance with their duties under the Online Safety Act 2023. For the purposes of this work the services in question are those which:

- are typically low reach – generally under or around 1% of UK population as active monthly users
- have high risk features or functionality – as defined by our published and forthcoming codes and guidance
- and/or are services brought to our attention for other risk factors.

4. A list of the platforms a) the taskforce is currently focusing its work on b) it has been in touch with regarding possible breaches of the Online Safety Act c) it has been in touch with which have not responded d) it has been in touch with which have indicated that they will not comply. Please include in this response the numbers of sites relevant to the questions above specifically focusing on suicide or self-harm, but not their names, for reasons of public safety.

We do hold this information, however we are withholding it as we consider that it is exempt from disclosure under section 44(1) of the FOI Act. Section 44(1) of the FOI Act provides that information is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure is prohibited by or under any enactment. The enactment

that prohibits the disclosure of this information is section 393(1) of the Communications Act 2003 (“the Communications Act”). Under this section, we are prohibited from disclosing information with respect to a particular business that has been obtained in the exercise of our regulatory functions, unless that business consents or one of the statutory gateways under section 393(2) of the Communications Act is met, neither of which apply here. Section 44 of the FOI Act is an absolute exemption and therefore is not subject to the public interest test.

You may be interested to note that we have recently opened an investigation as to whether an online suicide forum has failed/is failing to comply with its duties under the Online Safety Act. Further information can be found [here](#)

5. What date it expects to achieve its first takedowns should any sites not comply.

Should Ofcom decide to take enforcement action in relation to any service, the investigation will follow the procedures set out in Ofcom’s [Online Safety Enforcement Guidance](#). An overview of the typical online safety investigation process is included in Annex 1.

‘Take downs’ would involve the exercise of our ‘business disruption measures’ set out in sections 144-148 of the Online Safety Act. This allows us to apply for a court order which could order payment providers or advertisers to withdraw their services from a platform or require Internet Service Providers to block access to a site in the UK. Given that these are legal matters which require approval from a court, we cannot provide an accurate answer as to timescale, as it is dependent on factors outside of Ofcom’s control.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office](#).

Annex 1: Typical Ofcom online safety investigation process

Typical Ofcom online safety investigation process

— Ofcom can close with no further action

