

Reference: 1962208

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

19 March 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about a self-harm website.

We received this request on 20 February 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

I'm writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request information regarding [REDACTED]

For the past five years, from 1 January 2020 up to and including 19 February 2025, I would like to know:

- 1. How many complaints has Ofcom received regarding the above forum?*
- 2. How many complaints has Ofcom received regarding the above forum that mention [REDACTED] [REDACTED] somewhere in the complaint log? Please conduct a wildcard or free term search of the complaints log to ascertain this number if necessary. And please allow for misspellings, so also search for [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].*
- 3. If possible, please provide a summary of each of the complaints that mention [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] (or related misspellings, as outlined in 2)).*

For each of the answers, please break down the number of complaints by year.

Our response

We can neither confirm nor deny that we hold this information. We consider that some of the information, if held, would be 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 (such as the service referred to) 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 are likely to apply here. Section 44 of the FOI Act is an absolute exemption and therefore is not subject to the public interest test.

However, we thought it would be helpful to set out what the requirements in the Online Safety Act ('the Act') are around suicide content.

The Act makes persons that operate a wide range of online services legally responsible for keeping people safer online. It covers providers that provide search or user-to-user services and have links to the UK.

Service providers that are in scope of the Act must comply with numerous duties relating to illegal content and content that is harmful to children. Content that intentionally encourages or assists the suicide (or attempted suicide) of another person is illegal content under the Act. Under the Act, suicide content that is harmful to children is content that encourages, promotes or provides instructions for suicide. Under the Act, user-to-user and search service providers have a duty to assess the risk their services pose to users in relation to illegal content and content that is harmful to children and take steps to mitigate those risks. Further, user-to-user service providers have a duty to swiftly take down illegal content when it is identified and prevent children from encountering content that is harmful to them.

As Ofcom we have a duty to issue regulatory publications to help regulated services understand how they can comply with their legal duties. These include Codes of Practice which set out recommended measures services can take to mitigate risks of harm in compliance with their duties, and resources to help companies assess, understand and manage risk.

Where it appears that a provider is not taking steps to protect its users from harmful content, we won't hesitate to take enforcement action. This can include issuing significant financial penalties, requiring providers to make specific changes, and – in the most serious cases – applying to the courts to block sites in the UK. We have already issued [formal information requests](#) to providers of a number of services that may present particular risks of harm from illegal content, setting them a deadline of 31 March by which to submit records of their illegal harms risk assessments to us.

This article includes more information about what we are doing to protect people from online suicide content: [Protecting people from online suicide and self-harm material - Ofcom](#).

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](#).