

Reference: 02054804

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

24 September 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning payments to influencers for advertising the Online Safety Act.

We received this request on 14 August 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "FOI Act"). We wrote to you on 12 September 2025 to advise that we needed to extend the deadline to consider the public interest test in withholding or disclosing the information. We have now concluded this.

Your request & our response

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting information regarding the sums paid out to influencers for publicity surrounding the provisions of the Online Safety Act. Specifically, I seek information on:

- The amount of money spent, in total, on advertising the age verification rules of the Online Safety Act which came into effect on 25th July

New age assurance rules introduced under the Online Safety Act (OSA) by Parliament represent a significant change in how adult services and other platforms which host content designated as harmful to children operate. They also represent a change to adult users' online experience, namely how they access certain types of content, including pornography.

Given this, it was crucial for Ofcom to drive awareness in advance of these rules coming into effect – both to drive compliance among regulated services and to alert UK adults to the fact that their online experience may change. Spend by Ofcom on communications activity related to promoting age assurance measures totalled £456,968.40, including VAT where applicable. To note, our funding comes from fees paid to us by the companies we regulate and from the retention of Wireless Telegraphy Act receipts.

- The amount of money that has been paid out and is expected to be paid out to social media influencers and online personalities as part of this advertising push

Like most other large, public-facing organisations, engaging with influencers is becoming an integral part of our communications activity. Influencers are used commonly across the public and private sector to help organisations reach target audiences who are less likely to follow or engage with their owned channels and content.

Of the total amount spent on promoting age assurance measures, £74,700 (around 16%) was allocated to influencer activity (including fees and paid boosting of influencer content).

These videos generated around seven million views on Instagram alone. For context, Ofcom's own Instagram channel has fewer than 10,000 followers.

We do not plan to allocate any further funds to this age assurance campaign at this time.

A list of the influencers who have been paid to carry out this advertising work, and how much each was paid

If available, I would also request access to any correspondence on how this decision was made.

Ofcom partnered with Olivia Bentley, Ben Hurst, Olly Bowman, Sophia Smith Galer, Adam Beales for this campaign.

Regarding your request for the individual fees paid to each influencer, and any correspondence in relation to the decision to partner with influencers, this information is being withheld as we consider that its disclosure is exempt under section 43(2) of the FOI Act. This exemption deals with information that, if disclosed, would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of a person or company. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information. Annex A attached to this letter sets out the exemption in full, as well as the factors Ofcom considered when deciding where the public interest lay.

Please note that other exemptions may also be applicable.

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 A

Section 43(2) of the Act provides that:

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

Factors for disclosure	Factors for withholding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling the public to gain a better understanding of the commercial relationships between Ofcom and its suppliers and the nature of the services provided, and thereby increasing public confidence in Ofcom’s work. • Generally, there is a public interest in transparency of expenditure, especially if public money is involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofcom contracts with a variety of companies in order to support its operations and has ongoing financial relationships with many of them. Companies need to be confident that information relating to their business, such as information about them as an organisation or relating to the detail of their products or services, will not be disclosed if it would, or would be likely to, prejudice their commercial interests. • Ofcom continues to negotiate and require contracts like those related to this request. To release the specific information requested would put Ofcom in a detrimental position for future contract negotiations and would undermine its bargaining position with potential suppliers. In addition, to release the detailed amount Ofcom pays for a service could prejudice the commercial interests of the supplier – in that it would provide details of the supplier’s commercial relationships to its competitors or potential clients. We have disclosed above the spend where either this covers several suppliers or services so the amount cannot be attributed to a particular service/supplier. • Ofcom engages with a number of individuals, and has a financial relationship with them. Individuals contracting with Ofcom need to be confident that information and communications relating to their services or rates will not be disclosed if it would, or would be likely to, prejudice their commercial interests. • Where Ofcom has partnered with organisations or influencers to promote aspects of the Online Safety Act, this content and the partnerships have been made public. Disclosure of internal briefing notes provided relating to this content would not increase Ofcom’s transparency regarding its duties under the Online Safety Act.

Reasons why public interest favours withholding information

- We consider that, on balance, the public interest in withholding disclosure of the requested information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
- Ofcom enjoys a positive relationship with those companies and individuals it contracts with. The release of information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice commercial interests into the public domain would impair both Ofcom's relationship with providers of services, and adversely affect its commercial relationships with other contractors. If contractors could not be confident that such information provided by them to Ofcom would be withheld from disclosure, except in compelling circumstances, commercial activity may be impeded. Similarly, Ofcom's bargaining position, and therefore ability to obtain value for money in services it contracts for, may be undermined in future negotiations if full details about the cost of these services were disclosed. These considerations go against the public interest in disclosing.
- Weighing the issues presented, it is considered that on balance, the factors for withholding the requested information outweigh those for disclosing the information.