

Reference: 02246731

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

30 July 2026

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about the aggregate cost of Ofcom's 4chan enforcement action.

We received this request on 21 July 2026 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

For Ofcom's enforcement action concerning the online discussion board 4chan, from 10 June 2025 to the date this request is received, please provide:

The £100,000 cost band containing Ofcom's total recorded cost incurred or accrued for this enforcement action.

For example, please state whether the total falls within £0–£99,999, £100,000–£199,999, £200,000–£299,999, and so on. If Ofcom can disclose the exact total without prejudice, please provide it instead.

The requested figure should include the cost categories recorded against the case, including internal staff and external expenditure, but I am not requesting any breakdown. In particular, I do not seek the identity of a supplier, law firm, counsel or adviser; an hourly or blended rate; invoice, fee proposal, procurement record, contractual term, scope of work, legal advice, payment status or other information about a particular business.

If a single case total is not held, please provide the least granular existing aggregate or band that most closely answers the request. If no cost band is held, please state the £100,000 band into which the recorded total falls, without supplying the underlying figure or any breakdown.

The public interest is in the overall scale of resources devoted to this high-profile Online Safety Act enforcement action, not the pricing or commercial terms of any external provider. A broad whole-case band, with no supplier or rate information, should not reveal a negotiated fee or enable a competitor to infer one.

If any part is withheld, please identify the specific information withheld, whether the claimed likelihood of prejudice is "would" or "would be likely to", and explain why disclosure of a £100,000 whole-case band, rather than an exact figure, supplier-specific amount or rate would cause that prejudice. Please consider disclosure of any severable aggregate information.

Our response

Ofcom does not hold an estimate of the total cost or an aggregate cost of the enforcement action. To provide a reliable estimate or aggregate cost would require us to compile and review timesheets for all colleagues involved in the enforcement process, and this is therefore not information we hold in the format requested.

However, we can confirm the total number of FTE staff hours was between 0.9 and 2.6 per month between July 2025 and March 2026. This included team members from policy, standards, legal and enforcement teams.

The team involved consisted primarily of a mix of associate to principal level staff. You may find the information published in previous responses regarding [pay and staff benefits and staffing level and pay rates](#) useful in this context in coming to a view on the scale of the costs involved.

The information we do hold on the external legal costs is being withheld as we consider that its disclosure is exempt under section 43(2) of the FOI Act, as it relates solely to the services provided by external legal service providers. 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.

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 FOI 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
• Disclosure would enable the public to gain a better understanding of the commercial relationships between Ofcom and third parties and the nature of the services provided, and thereby increasing public confidence in Ofcom’s work. • Generally, there is a public interest in the transparency of expenditure, particularly if public money is involved.	• Ofcom continues to negotiate its fees like those related to this request regarding legal service providers. To release the specific information requested would likely put Ofcom in a detrimental position for future fee negotiations by undermining its bargaining position with potential legal service providers. • In addition, the release of the amount Ofcom paid would likely prejudice the commercial interests of the contracted legal firm – in that it would provide details of negotiated fees to its competitors or potential clients. • 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 relating to the charges for services, will not be disclosed if it would, or would be likely to, prejudice their commercial interests. Releasing companies’ commercially sensitive information might detrimentally affect their negotiating power in the future, and may deter them from partaking in our procurement exercises or providing us with services in future.
Reasons why public interest favours withholding information	
• We consider that, on balance, the potential prejudice to commercial interests outweighs the public interest in disclosure of the amount spent on legal fees regarding this case. • 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 organisations 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 them. 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 details about the cost of these services were disclosed.

- Weighing the issues presented, it is considered that on balance, the factors for withholding the requested information outweigh those for disclosing the information.