

28 August 2026

To online service providers in scope of the Online Safety Act:

Safety duties remain in force and Ofcom expects full compliance

On 15 June 2026, the UK Government announced plans to introduce new measures to strengthen online protections for children, including a social media ban for under-16s and restrictions on certain high-risk features. Further details of these proposals were published by the Government on 17 July 2026.¹

I want to underline that these announcements about future online safety measures have not affected providers' current obligations under the Online Safety Act 2023. Service providers must comply with their existing children's safety and illegal content duties, against a background where our [research and evidence](#) shows that children continue to be exposed to unacceptable levels of harmful content and activities online.

Service providers' existing responsibilities to protect children online

As a reminder, service providers must complete Children's Access Assessments, and where they are likely to be accessed by children, must:

- identify and assess relevant risks using Ofcom's Children's Register of Risks and Risk Profiles;
- implement the measures in Ofcom's Codes of Practice or take alternative measures that equally meet the child safety duties; and
- maintain appropriate records in order to comply with record keeping and review duties.

All service providers must also continue to assess the risks of illegal activity that may impact children and take relevant measures to address these risks.

For further information about services' responsibilities to protect children online, please consult our industry resources [here](#), including tools to help complete risk assessments and identify relevant safety measures. You can also sign up to our industry bulletin [here](#) for quarterly updates on what services need to know and do, links to new publications and guidance, and information on how we are taking action to drive improvements for users online.

Expected new rules to protect children from harm online

The UK Government has set out its intention to introduce further protections for children online. These include: a ban on social media companies from providing their services to under 16s; preventing under 16s from accessing harmful functions on other online services, including gaming services; requiring default restrictions for 16-and 17-year-olds from harmful functions and preventing under 18s from accessing AI chatbot services that primarily offer sexualised content.

¹ Please see further information on the Government's announcements [here](#). [Accessed 14 August 2026]

The Government has indicated that some of these new measures will come into force from Spring 2027 and, alongside our ongoing implementation of the Online Safety Act, we are working closely with the Government to prepare for the expansion to the online safety regime. This includes carrying out a rapid assessment of highly effective age assurance at 16, which we will publish in October. We will also consider whether changes to the regime require updates to our existing regulatory products, including our guidance and Codes of Practice, and would consult before making any such updates.

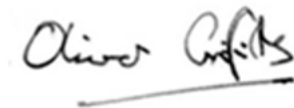
Ofcom expects action to protect children now

We understand that many service providers will already be considering the implications for their services of the announced online safety enhancements. However, until any legal changes to providers' duties come into effect, the existing obligations under the Online Safety Act continue to apply, and we expect full compliance with those duties now, taking into account our Codes and guidance.

In May I set [out our priorities for action](#): Improving protections for children; removing illegal content, especially hate and terror; and protecting women and girls. These priorities remain unchanged and will continue to drive our work in the months ahead. Where providers have [committed to safety improvements](#), we expect those measures to be implemented effectively and without delay and will be monitoring implementation closely.

We will not hesitate to take enforcement action if services fail to comply with their existing safety duties.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oliver Griffiths', with a horizontal line underneath.

Oliver Griffiths