Paper to lie before both Houses of Parliament for a period of 40 days, during which time either House may resolve that the draft amendments to the code of practice be not approved.

Ofcom

Draft amendments to the Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services

Draft of amendments prepared under section 41 of the Online Safety Act 2023 and submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 43(1) on 16 November 2026.

Paper to lie before both Houses of Parliament for a period of 40 days, during which time either House may resolve that the draft amendments to the code of practice be not approved.

Office of Communications

Draft amendments to the Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 43(2) of the Online Safety Act 2023

November 2026

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1. Preamble

1.1 On 4 July 2025 Ofcom issued the Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services in accordance with section 41 of the Online Safety Act ('the Act').[1]

1.2 Ofcom issues the amendments set out in section 2 of this notification in accordance with section 43(4) of the Act.

1.3 In the course of preparing the draft of amendments of that Code, Ofcom consulted the persons mentioned in section 41(6) and (7) of that Act.

1.4 In accordance with section 43(2) and (3) of the Act, the draft has been laid before Parliament for the 40-day period, during which time neither House of Parliament resolved not to approve the draft.

1.5 The amendments come into force [*at the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which they are issued*] in accordance with section 43(4) of the Act.

1.6 Ofcom will publish the amended code of practice on its website in accordance with section 46 of the Act.

Signed by

[Name]

[Position]

A person authorised by Ofcom under paragraph 18 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002

[Date]

[1] Ofcom, Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services (4 July 2025). A consolidated version of the Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services incorporating amendments is published on Ofcom's website (Online safety regulatory documents and guidance).

2. Amendments

2.1 The Protection of Children Code of Practice for search services is amended as follows.

Amendments to the introduction

2.2 In Section 1 (Introduction)–

a) in paragraph 1.10, for "Commissioner's Office" substitute "Commission";
b) in paragraph 1.11, for "Commissioner's" substitute "Commission's";
c) after paragraph 1.11, insert–

"External documents

1.12 A hard copy of any external document referred to in the recommended measures can be obtained by writing to Ofcom at Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HA (tel. 020 7981 3000).".

Amendment to index of recommended measures

2.3 In Section 3 (Index of recommended measures), in the entries after the heading "Search moderation", after the entry for PCS C4, insert the following entry–

PCS C4A	Steps to take on reversal of content decisions	All **services likely to be accessed by children**.	Section 30(8) Section 33(2) and 33(3)

Amendments to recommended measures

Amendment to PCS C1

2.4 In Section 4 (Recommended measures), in subsection C (Search moderation), in PCS C1.12, before sub-paragraph (a), insert–

"za) Recommendation PCS C4A;".

Amendment to PCS C2

2.5 In Section 4 (Recommended measures), in subsection C (Search moderation), in PCS C2.4, before sub-paragraph (a), insert–

"za) Recommendation PCS C4A;".

Amendment to PCS C3

2.6 In Section 4 (Recommended measures), in subsection C (Search moderation), in PCS C3, at the end, insert–

"Safeguard for freedom of expression and privacy

PCS C3.5 Recommendation PCS C4A is a safeguard to protect ***United Kingdom users'*** right to freedom of expression and the privacy of ***United Kingdom users***.".

Insertion of a new recommendation (PCS C4A)

2.7 In Section 4 (Recommended measures), in subsection C (Search moderation), after PCS C4, insert–

"PCS C4A Steps to take on reversal of content decisions

Application

PCS C4A.1 This measure applies to a ***provider*** in respect of each **service likely to be accessed by children** it provides.

Recommendation

PCS C4A.2 If a ***provider*** reverses a previous decision that ***search content*** is **content that is harmful to children** or **content that is harmful to children proxy**, and this reversal is not in relation to a **relevant complaint** that is a **content appeal** (for which, see PCS D10), it should take the steps listed in PCS D10.2(a), (b) and (c).".

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