Annex 2: Equality impact assessment and Welsh language impact assessment

Additional Safety Measures

Statement Annex

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A1. Equality impact assessment and Welsh language impact assessment

Annex structure

A1.1 This annex contains our Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Assessment for the decisions included in the November 2026 Additional Safety Measures Statement.

A1.2 This annex is broken up into different sections:

a) Equality legal framework
b) Our equality impact assessment
c) Measure-specific equality considerations
d) Other feedback received on the equality impact assessment
e) Welsh language legal framework
f) Welsh language impact assessment

Equality legal framework

A1.3 We assess the impact of our decisions on individuals and communities with protected characteristics, in line with our obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.[1] [2]

A1.4 There is a substantial degree of overlap between equality matters and matters to which we are required to have regard under the Communications Act 2003.[3] We have also had regard to these matters in this equality impact assessment. We consider that groups with protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented among groups in need of special protection and those on low incomes.

A1.5 In addition, we have considered the different needs and views of people across the various parts of the UK, even though the measures we are adding to our Illegal Content Codes of Practice for user-to-user services (Illegal Content Codes) and Protection of Children Code of Practice for user-to-user services (Protection of Children Code) apply to the UK as a whole.

[1] Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 stipulates that Ofcom has due regard to the need to: i) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, ii) harassment and victimisation; Advance equality of opportunity; and iii) Foster good relations between different groups. The groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

[2] Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 extends the obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, to include having regard for the promotion of equal opportunity between persons of different political opinion, marital status, and between persons with dependants and persons without.

[3] Section 3(4) of the Communications Act 2003 requires Ofcom, when performing our duties, to have regard to the following when they appear relevant: the vulnerability of children and others whose circumstances appear to Ofcom to put them in need of special protection; the needs of person with disabilities, of the elderly and of those on low incomes; and the different interests of persons in the different parts of the United Kingdom, of the different ethnic communities within the United Kingdom and of persons living in rural and in urban areas.

A1.6 We consulted on the matters in this impact assessment in our April 2025 Illegal Harms Further Consultation on User Controls (April 2025 Consultation), and our June 2025 Additional Safety Measures Consultation (June 2025 Consultation).[4]

Our equality impact assessment

Our position in the consultation

A1.7 In our April 2025 and June 2025 Consultations, we proposed measures designed to reduce the risk of illegal harms, and other harms to children, online.

A1.8 We assessed that these proposed measures would have primarily positive impacts for people with protected characteristics – in particular women, girls, and children. This was because these proposals included stronger protections against child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), improvements to recommender systems, user safety and reporting systems.

Summary of stakeholder responses

A1.9 In response to our April 2025 and June 2025 Consultations, we received a number of responses relating to our Equality Impact Assessment.

A1.10 Stakeholders expressed support for several of the measures which seek to create a safer online experience for groups set out in this assessment, in particular women and girls.[5] For example, stakeholders expressed support for the measure on banning users who share, generate or upload CSEA content and content proxies, and banning users who receive child sexual abuse material (CSAM), and preventing their return to the service.[6]

A1.11 Some stakeholders said that several of the measures would be effective at preventing the dissemination of content or online behaviour targeting users because of their religious expression. The Center for Countering Digital Harm (CCDH) welcomed our user sanctions measures as a means to limiting the spread of antisemitic content, and the Antisemitism Policy Trust expressed support for the inclusion of harms such as terrorism in our hash matching measures, noting this would mitigate against the dissemination of antisemitic content online.[7] [8]

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[4] This included our proposed measures relating to highly effective age assurance, user-to-user settings, functionalities and user support, livestreaming, crisis response, proactive technologies, hash matching for intimate image abuse, terrorism content and image-based child sexual abuse material (CSAM), recommender systems, CSEA banning and user sanctions measures.

[5] Canadian Center for Child Protection (C3P) response to the June 2025 Additional Safety Measures Consultation (June 2025 Consultation), p.16; Check My Ads Institute response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.11; the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.15; [✂]; Internet Matters response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.14; the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.40; Marie Collins Foundation response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.16; [✂]; National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.6; [✂]; [✂]; the Scottish Government response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.3; the Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.13; the Welsh Government (Digital Resilience in Education) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.11.

[6] See chapter 3: User Sanctions for details of our decision on this measure.

[7] Antisemitism Policy Trust response to the June 2025 Consultation, p. 3; Centre for Countering Digital Harm (CCDH – previously Centre for Countering Digital Hate) response to the June 2025 Consultation, pp.2-3.

[8] See chapter 3: User Sanctions for details of our decision on the measure.

A1.12 More broadly, the Welsh Government's Digital Resilience in Education Team said that, although the measures proposed in our June 2025 Consultation could have a negative impact on people earning an income online (particularly via livestreaming), this was justified by the benefits.[9]

A1.13 However, some stakeholders expressed concern that the measures could negatively impact marginalised groups and their experience online. The Together Declaration Campaign and three individual respondents said that the cost of implementing the measures could lead to smaller services used and/or run by marginalised communities having to close.[10] They said that this would negatively impact the ability of these groups to engage online or access specialist information. This stakeholder feedback, along with our responses, is set out in the section 'Measure-Specific Equality Considerations'.

Our final assessment

A1.14 While we have decided to broadly confirm the measures proposed in our April 2025 and June 2025 Consultations, we have made some changes. The changes were made after considering further evidence and feedback submitted in response to the consultations. The decisions are summarised in the section titled 'Measure-specific considerations' and are detailed further in the relevant chapters in the statement.

A1.15 We have considered whether the decisions in the statement will have a particular impact on persons sharing protected characteristics.[11] [12] In particular, we have considered whether these decisions may discriminate against such persons or impact on equality of opportunity or the fostering of good relations. Overall, the changes made since our consultations reinforce our commitment to creating positive outcomes for persons sharing protected characteristics.

A1.16 In response to the feedback that the measures may have a negative impact on marginalised groups, we recognise that some small or marginalised communities rely on smaller services, and that these services may find it harder to put the proposed measures in place. We understand that this burden could have an impact on the services' quality or user experience on such services, or cause smaller services to cease operating in the UK.

A1.17 In chapter 13 of our statement: Combined impact assessment, we have assessed the costs associated with the measures – including the impact on smaller services – in relation to their expected benefits to users, and consider that the overall package of measures is proportionate given the risk of harms to users and the potential benefits of reducing these risks.

A1.18 The next section contains a full assessment of measure-specific equality impact considerations, including considerations around changes made to the measures as proposed in the June 2025 Consultation.

A1.19 Based on our analysis of stakeholder responses and our assessment of the measures' impact on equality, we have concluded that our decisions will positively impact persons

[9] The Welsh Government's Digital Resilience in Education Team's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 19.
[10] [✂], [✂]; [✂]; The Together Declaration campaign's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 4.
[11] The Equality Act 2010 defines the following protected characteristics: race, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and religion.
[12] The Northern Ireland Act 1998 defines belief in the UK and also dependents and political opinion in Northern Ireland as a protected characteristic.

with protected characteristics. This is because we expect these measures to reduce the harm they are designed to address, particularly those harms that impact groups and persons with protected characteristics. In addition, in areas where we acknowledge that measures may negatively impact users sharing protected characteristics, we have outlined the reasons why we assess that these impacts are proportionate to the harms that the measures seek to address. We have also concluded that the measures will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity and/or fostering of good relations. As such, our overall position has not changed since our assessment in our April 2025 and June 2025 Consultations.

Measure-specific equality considerations

Livestreaming

Reporting for imminent harm

A1.20 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed a measure which would help users quickly and easily report livestreams containing content that depicts a risk of imminent physical harm.

A1.21 We assessed that this measure would provide particularly positive benefits to the groups defined in this assessment because of its inclusion of harms such as terrorism content, grooming or image-based CSAM, assisting or encouraging suicide, hate, or harassment, stalking, threats and abuse. These are harms which groups sharing protected characteristics disproportionately experience online, as noted in our Illegal Harms Register of Risks.

A1.22 We have decided to broadly confirm the measure and therefore assess that its associated equality benefits remain, with a small change to the harms in scope of the measure to include animal cruelty due to stakeholder feedback.[13]

A1.23 We received no other feedback to challenge our assessment of this measure, and therefore it has not changed.

User sanctions

Banning users for CSEA

A1.24 In our June 2025 Consultation, we assessed that our proposal to recommend banning users who have shared, generated or uploaded CSEA content, or those who receive CSAM, would protect children from the harm caused by CSEA.

A1.25 In our June 2025 Consultation Equality Impact Assessment, we recognised that children may also be disproportionately negatively impacted by this measure if they are banned for sharing self-generated indecent imagery (SGII). Such children would fall into the category of people who are in need of special protection, to a greater extent than the special protection that children already need by virtue of their age. We have mitigated against this risk by outlining guidance in chapter 3 in the statement: User Sanctions about extenuating

[13] As explained in chapter 1: Introduction, our duties and navigating the statement, we now consider encouraging or assisting suicide and serious self-harm as one kind of illegal harm.

circumstances, such as if children have shared SGII because of being groomed, or as part of an age-appropriate relationship.[14]

A1.26 We have decided to broadly confirm the measure as proposed in our June 2025 Consultation. However, we have made amendments to the wording of the measure to ensure that users who report CSEA content or unknowingly receive CSAM are not banned by default under the measure. This amendment was made in response to stakeholder feedback.

A1.27 We received some support for the overall impact of the measure, and did not receive any evidence to challenge our Equality Impact Assessment.[15] Therefore, our assessment has not changed.

User sanctions policy

A1.28 In our June 2025 Consultation, we considered the impact of our proposals to impose sanctions on users who share illegal or harmful content. We assessed that this would provide users with a safer online experience, especially users belonging to vulnerable groups (such as children, survivors of sexual abuse, and marginalised communities).

A1.29 We acknowledged that there is a risk that sanctions may have a particular impact on vulnerable users suffering from suicide ideation, self-harm, or an eating disorder. They may be sanctioned for sharing their personal experience (or may not share their experience because they are worried about being sanctioned). We proposed that, when setting their sanctions policies, providers should have regard to the potential impact of the sanction on the user who is being sanctioned. This may include considering the potential vulnerability of the user.

A1.30 We also acknowledged the risk that if content moderation processes are biased against any groups with protected characteristics, it could lead to user sanctions being applied disproportionately to these groups. However, we assessed that our existing measures on performance targets and appeals, as well as the safeguards we have included in our measures on detecting content, should mitigate these risks.

A1.31 In the statement, we have broadly confirmed the measures as proposed. However, based on cost and proportionality assessments, the measures will not apply to services that are small and single or low risk. Instead, they will apply to large service providers and/or multi-risk service providers.

A1.32 We expect that this will reduce financial burden on smaller low risk providers which are at low risk of the relevant harms, while seeking to reduce harm on large services with larger user bases. We also expect that small multi-risk services being in scope will continue to offer the same protections to users we assessed in our June 2025 Consultation. Given no feedback was provided on our assessment, our position remains the same. Full detail of

[14] See chapter 3: User sanctions for details of our decision on this measure.

[15] Canadian Center for Child Protection (C3P) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.16; Check My Ads Institute response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.11; the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.15; [✂]; Internet Matters response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.14; the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.40; Marie Collins Foundation response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.16; [✂]; National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.6; [✂]; [✂]; the Scottish Government response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.3; the Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.13; the Welsh Government (Digital Resilience in Education) response to the June 2025 Consultation, p.11.

our safeguards for users' rights in light of this amendment can be found in chapter 3: User sanctions.

Extending user controls

A1.33 In our April 2025 Consultation, we assessed that extending the measures on allowing users to block and mute other user accounts and to disable comments to more services should have a positive impact on those with protected characteristics.

A1.34 In particular, we assessed that women would benefit as they tend to disproportionately face issues online such as harassment and stalking. We also assessed that the measures would have a positive impact on people sharing protected characteristics who disproportionately experience abuse, hate speech and harassment online.[16]

A1.35 Common Sense Media said that blocking tools set out in our User Controls measures would help protect adolescent girls from uncomfortable contact from strangers online, as well as protecting girls and LGBTQ+ children from exposure to suicide-related content.[17]

A1.36 We received no feedback that challenged our assessment in our April 2025 Consultation, and therefore it has not changed.

Highly effective age assurance in the Illegal Content Codes

A1.37 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed to use highly effective age assurance to support our Illegal Content Codes. Specifically, we proposed that service providers can use highly effective age assurance to implement measures, which we recommend to protect children from grooming and other illegal harms.[18]

A1.38 We Are Survivors, Open Rights Group and an individual respondent raised concerns that the measures requiring the use of highly effective age assurance would have a disproportionate impact on certain groups.[19] They said that these groups may not be able to access the verification methods, which would limit their use of the service. The groups discussed by these stakeholders were survivors, disabled users, and vulnerable users, respectively.

A1.39 In chapter 5: Highly effective age assurance in the Illegal Content Codes, we outline our expectation that service providers should consider accessibility not just in the context of specific methods, but for the purposes of the entire age assurance process they implement.[20] One method may not be accessible to all, but when supplemented by alternative methods this can create an accessible age assurance process.

A1.40 Service providers have flexibility in how they implement an age assurance process, and have been given guidance through our measures as to how to ensure their process is accessible to all users of the service. As such, we assess that our measures on highly

[16] We defined these groups in our April 2025 Consultation as people from different races, religions, sexual orientation, those with disabilities, those of different political opinions and those who have undergone gender reassignment.
[17] Common Sense Media response to the April 2025 User Controls Consultation, pp.2-4.
[18] We note that the measures we are now recommending mean that highly effective age assurance may also be deployed for the purposes of complying with the illegal content safety duty in relation to content recommender systems.
[19] The Open Rights Group's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 4; [✂]; We are Survivors' response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 17.
[20] See chapter 5: Highly effective age assurance in our Illegal Content Codes.

effective age assurance will provide a positive impact on groups sharing protected characteristics.

Increasing the effectiveness of safety defaults and supportive messaging

A1.41 In our June 2025 Consultation, we assessed that increasing the effectiveness of safety defaults and supportive messaging would provide stronger protections for children against grooming and its associated harms, including CSEA.

A1.42 We received no feedback to challenge this assessment and have made no changes to the measure. Therefore, we are maintaining our initial assessment.

Broadening appeals to cover proxies

A1.43 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed amendments to the content appeals measures in our Illegal Content and Protection of Children Codes to help safeguard users' human rights. These amendments will extend the ability to appeal actions taken by service providers, in order to cover action in relation to proxies for illegal content and content harmful to children.

A1.44 We received no feedback on the impact of these changes on equality considerations. We assess that the amendments can protect complainants and users against excessive takedown of content, protecting their right to freedom of expression. This is particularly likely to benefit groups which have historically experienced discrimination, as it will help protect against any unidentified bias in moderation processes, by allowing groups to appeal against potentially biased decisions.

Proactive Technology to detect unknown image-based CSAM

A1.45 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed criteria for providers to assess both existing and new proactive technology for detecting target illegal content and content harmful to children. We proposed that if providers assessed that proactive technology met all these criteria, it should be deployed to detect relevant harms on their service.

A1.46 The British and Irish Law Education Technology Association (BILETA) said that measures that mandate proactive technical detection, such as Upload Prevention for known illegal content, positively impact victims and survivors by reducing the risk of their abuse circulating online.[21]

A1.47 Other stakeholders raised concerns about potential inequal outcomes resulting from the measure. Open Rights Group said that proactive technologies risk language and dialect bias, lack of cultural awareness and socioeconomic disparities, marginalising groups such as activists, protestors, LGBTQ+, and racialised communities because algorithms misinterpret speech or images from these groups.[22] The Open Rights Group campaign's response expressed similar concerns.[23]

A1.48 In light of stakeholder feedback more broadly, we have decided to change the measures we proposed in the June 2025 Consultation. We are now recommending that providers

[21] BILETA's response to the June 2025 Consultation, p. 45.
[22] The Open Rights Group's response to the June 2025 Consultation, p. 45.
[23] Open Rights Group campaign, p. 4.

should use proactive technology for the purpose of detecting unknown image-based child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Providers should use one (or a combination) of the specified technologies[24] listed in our measure. We consider these are capable in principle of being sufficiently accurate, effective and lacking in bias where they meet our proactive technology criteria and therefore we do not consider the measure will have systemically adverse impacts on minorities and historically marginalised groups.

Hash matching

Hash matching for terrorism content

A1.49 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed to recommend hash matching to detect terrorism content. We assessed that this measure would have a positive impact on individuals sharing characteristics such as race and ethnicity, religion, age and gender, as these characteristics could lead to an increased risk of harm to individuals online.[25]

A1.50 As explained in our June 2025 Consultation, there is a risk of terrorism hash databases disproportionately focusing on Islamist terrorist groups and material, meaning that incorrect identification of content as terrorism content may disproportionately affect Muslims if content of a religious or political nature is conflated with that related to terrorism. However, we note that such bias, if it exists, would arise from the fact that historically the UK has proscribed more organisations with an Islamist ideology than other organisations and as such would not be caused by our measure.

A1.51 To guard against potential risks relating to bias, we have recommended that arrangements are in place to ensure that the set of hashes used does not plainly discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics. We have also recommended various safeguards in the measure, including that the set of hashes used be sourced from a person or persons with appropriate expertise in identifying the type of illegal content concerned.

A1.52 We have made various amendments to the measure following consultation, which we expect to improve it. We do not assess that these changes have a negative impact on those with relevant protected characteristics.

A1.53 We received no further feedback on the assessment specifically and it therefore remains unchanged.

Extending hash matching for CSAM to pornography services

A1.54 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed to extend the hash matching for CSAM measure to include regulated pornography services. We have identified in our Illegal Harms Register of Risks that individuals with characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity could lead to an increased risk of harm from CSAM.[26] We therefore assessed that this measure would have a positive impact on individuals sharing these characteristics specifically.

A1.55 Our recommendations will also help to provide additional protections for children. As CSAM and child abuse more generally disproportionately affect women, our

[24] Where we assessed a class and/or subclass of technology is capable in principle of being accurate, effective and lacking in bias, where it meets our proactive technology criteria, we refer to these technologies as 'specified technologies'.
[25] Paragraphs 1.37 to 1.42, Illegal Harm Register of Risks.
[26] Paragraphs 2B.39-2B.50, Illegal Harm Register of Risks.

recommendations will also provide additional protection for them.[27] Moreover, we expect that extending this measure to pornography services will materially increase the protection offered to those with protected characteristics.

A1.56 As mentioned above for our hash matching for terror measure, our recommendations to providers ensure that the set of hashes used does not plainly discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics, including recommended safeguards around appropriate sourcing of hash sets.

A1.57 We received no further feedback on the assessment specifically and it therefore remains unchanged.

Recommender systems

A1.58 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed that where there are indicators that content is potentially illegal, including hate, terrorism, suicide and foreign interference, that it be excluded from recommender feeds unless and until it is reviewed.

A1.59 We assessed that this measure may minimise the number of UK users who encounter content targeting protected groups, including illegal hate speech and terrorism content, helping to reduce the associated risk of harm to individuals with protected characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, age and gender. We therefore expected the measure to have a positive impact on individuals with these characteristics.

A1.60 In response to stakeholder feedback, we have amended the measure to be targeted at users who are not determined to be adults through highly effective age assurance and to remove the foreign interference offence from its scope.

A1.61 An individual respondent stated that malicious reporting, which disproportionately affects LGBTQ+ users and sex workers can lead to the incorrect takedown of content, even with a robust appeals process.[28] We acknowledge the risks around malicious reporting, particularly a risk of indirect discrimination against users with protected characteristics. If service providers use relevant available information from user complaints and reports to indicate if content is potentially illegal content, there is a risk that that information could be disproportionately associated with content posted by individuals who have protected characteristics, due to malicious reports.

A1.62 In chapter 11 of the statement: Recommender Systems, we explain that flexibility is afforded to service providers, through the use of 'relevant available information', to determine if content is indicated to be potentially illegal content. This will improve the efficacy of the measure by relying on all the information a service has available to it to design and operate recommender systems. Providers can consider potentially illegal content in a manner that would be more difficult for bad actors to identify areas for malicious reporting and target groups or persons with protected characteristics.

A1.63 Overall, we consider that the flexibility given to providers to design and operated content recommender systems so that content indicated potentially to be illegal content is excluded from feeds, makes the impact on groups with protected characteristics proportionate to the risk of harm that the measure seeks to address.

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[27] IWF, 2023 The Annual Report 2022 #Behind the Screens: A deep dive into the digital and social emergency happening #BehindTheScreens, in children's bedrooms.
[28] Are, C response to our June 2025 consultation, p. 2.

Illegal Content Judgements Guidance (ICJG)

A1.64 In our June 2025 Consultation, we proposed to amend our ICJG to set out two illustrative scenarios to provide further guidance in supporting service providers in their illegal content judgements.

A1.65 We assessed that this would support service providers in identifying and reducing the spread of CSAM on their services. As a result, this guidance directly contributes to the protection of survivors and victims of child sexual abuse.

A1.66 In response to stakeholder feedback, we have refined our scenarios, which articulate when an illegal content judgement can be made regarding CSAM.

A1.67 As explained in our June 2025 Consultation, we assessed that because women are more likely to be victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, women as a protected group are likely to experience the greatest benefits from these amendments.[29] We did not receive any feedback on our Equality Impact Assessment for our ICJG amendment, and therefore our assessment has not changed.

Other feedback received on the Equality Impact Assessment

Impact on educational and creative content

A1.68 Three stakeholders said that our content moderation measures would lead to reduced supportive, educational, and creative content, which would have a negative impact on children's experience online.[30]

Our response

A1.69 The respondents were not specific on the measures they felt would reduce supportive, educational and creative content to children. Based on a review of the measures, we expect they were referring to the Proactive technology measures and the CSAM and terrorism hash matching measures.

A1.70 In previous publications and our June 2025 Consultation, we have set out expectations for service providers to have robust appeals processes where there is a risk of content being incorrectly removed or restricted. [31]

A1.71 The measures linked with restricting content in this statement are targeted at restricting CSAM and terrorism content. We have explained the safeguards against incorrect identification of content in our assessment of each measure in chapter 9 of the statement: Deployment of proactive technology to detect image-based CSAM and chapter 10: Hash matching.

[29] IWF, 2023 The Annual Report 2022 #Behind the Screens: A deep dive into the digital and social emergency happening #BehindTheScreens, in children's bedrooms.
[30] [✂]; [✂]; [✂].
[31] See Illegal Content Codes of Practice for user-to-user services (Illegal Content Codes), ICU D8-D10, Protection of Children Code of Practice for user-to-user services (Protection of Children Code), PCU D8-D12, and our June 2025 Consultation, ICU D15-16.

A1.72 We assess that children are a key beneficiary of our measures, due to the expected increase in detection of relevant harms such as CSAM and terrorism, significantly reducing harm to children online and creating a safer online experience.

A1.73 We did not receive any evidence that had an impact on our overall equality assessment of these measures and our position remains unchanged to those outlined in the previous section.

Privacy concerns and encryption

A1.74 The Association for Competitive Technology (ACT) stated that our proposed measures would have a negative impact on users who rely on encryption to communicate safely.[32] Three individual stakeholders said that the measures negatively impact online spaces and communities, for marginalised communities and/or political activists, as well as users sharing protected characteristics.[33]

A1.75 NetChoice added that the data needed for age verification requirements creates significant security risks for children. [34]

Our response

A1.76 We did not receive any evidence from the respondents about the negative impact on users or the potential security risks.

A1.77 In line with our duties under Schedule 4, we have developed these measures with appropriate safeguards to ensure providers consider the importance of protecting the rights of users, freedom of expression within the law and protecting the privacy of users, particularly children.

Disagreement with our Equality Impact Assessment

A1.78 Four individual stakeholders expressed disagreement with our equality impact assessment as part of their response to our consultation but did not raise specific concerns or mention any groups included in this assessment. [35]

Our response

A1.79 For the reasons outlined in this annex and the statement, it is our assessment that the groups included in our Equality Impact Assessment will experience positive impacts thanks to the decisions made in this Statement.

Welsh Language Legal Framework

A1.80 Welsh language has official status in Wales. To give effect to this, certain public bodies, including Ofcom, are required to comply with the Welsh Language Standards. Accordingly, we have considered:

- The potential impact of our policy proposals on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language;

[32] ACT's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 12.
[33] [✂];[✂]; [✂].
[34] NetChoice's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 8.
[35] [✂]; [✂.]; [✂]; [✂].

- The potential impact of our policy proposals on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language; and
- How our proposals could be formulated so as to have, or increase, a positive impact, or not to have adverse effects or to decrease any adverse effects.

A1.81 Ofcom's powers and duties in relation to online safety regulation are set out in the Online Safety Act 2023 (the Act) and must be exercised in accordance with our general duties under section 3 of the Communications Act 2003. In formulating our decisions in this Statement, where relevant and to the extent we have discretion to do so in the exercise of our functions, we have considered the potential impacts on opportunities to the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Our position in the June 2025 Consultation

A1.82 In our April 2025 and our June 2025 Consultations, we considered the potential impacts of our proposals on opportunities to the Welsh language and treating Welsh no less favourably than English in our Welsh Language Impact Assessment. We considered that our proposals were likely to continue the overall positive effects of our recommendations in our December 2024 and April 2025 Statements.[36] In this annex, we have assessed stakeholder feedback to this assessment.

Summary of stakeholder responses

General feedback

A1.83 One civil society stakeholder and one public body stakeholder provided insight to considering the use of Welsh online when designing the Codes of Practice.

A1.84 The NSPCC said that Welsh language Impact Assessments were important given the widespread use of social media by children in Wales.[37] Conversely, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) consulted with two Welsh police forces, who said that they did not consider the Welsh language to be a prominent feature in harmful online behaviour and therefore saw no risk of our proposals negatively impacting Welsh speakers.[38]

Disagreement with our Welsh Language Impact Assessment

A1.85 The Open Rights Group and one individual stakeholder said that users of the Welsh language online would be negatively impacted by disproportionate costs of implementing our proposed measures on Welsh language sites.[39]

A1.86 Two individual stakeholders said that users speaking Welsh online risked being disproportionately impacted by our automated content moderation measures, because the technology was focused on English language content.[40]

[36] Our December 2024 Statement on Protecting People from Illegal Harms, and Our April 2025 Statement on Protecting Children from Harms Online.
[37] The NSPCC's response to our June 2025 Consultation, pp.51-52.
[38] The NPCC's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p.19.
[39] Open Rights Group's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 47; [✂].
[40] [✂]; [✂].

Other stakeholder feedback

A1.87 A number of other stakeholders provided feedback on the necessity of clear guidance on Welsh language content, safeguarding the Welsh language, and transparency reporting and the importance of conducting further research.

A1.88 One academic stakeholder and an individual recommended that there be clearer guidance around Welsh language content obligations and prioritisation.[41] BILETA noted the importance of all information regarding complaints, content moderation and user notices being provided in Welsh.[42]

A1.89 The Welsh Government's Digital Resilience in Education Team requested further information to ensure users that moderation of content in the Welsh language would be sufficiently provided for.[43] Two stakeholders said that Ofcom should have monitoring and reporting protocols to determine the practical impact of the measures on Welsh language users online.[44]

A1.90 The NSPCC said that further work would be necessary to determine whether children who do not speak English online would be less positively impacted by our proposals than children who do speak English, and that further research was needed to determine implications for the safeguarding of children who speak Welsh online.[45]

Our final assessment

A1.91 In response to concerns around content moderation systems' bias against Welsh language content, we note that our current content moderation measure ICU C6.2 recommends providers should resource its content moderation function taking account of its user base, including in relation to languages. We would therefore expect that if a provider has a prominent Welsh-speaking user base, and this is reflected in their risk assessment, they should have regard to this when resourcing their content moderation function. In addition, if using proactive technology, we have provided guidance to providers to ensure that they configure and deploy classes of proactive technology we consider are capable in principle of being accurate, effective and lacking in bias if configured and deployed in accordance with our criteria.[46]

A1.92 In response to concerns around the disproportionate costs of implementing the measures for Welsh language sites, we consider that whilst the overall cost could be significant for some smaller services which use the Welsh language, the package of measures is proportionate given the risk of harms to users and the benefits of reducing these risks.

A1.93 While we do not have any plans to conduct any further research into children's use of the Welsh language online at this stage, we welcome relevant findings from stakeholders to help inform our continuous work to keep children safe online.

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[41] [✂]; The Welsh Government's Digital Resilience in Education Team's response to the June 2025 consultation, p.8.
[42] BILETA's response to the June 2025 consultation, p. 7.
[43] BILETA's response to our June 2025 Consultation, p. 49, [✂].
[44] [✂]; The Welsh Government's Digital Resilience in Education Team, p.18.
[45] The NSPCC's response to our June 2025 Consultation, pp.51-52.
[46] See chapter 9: Deployment of proactive technology to detect image-based CSAM for further details of this measure.

A1.94 We conclude the measures are likely to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. As such, our assessment has not changed since our June 2025 Consultation.