Deceased Child User Duties

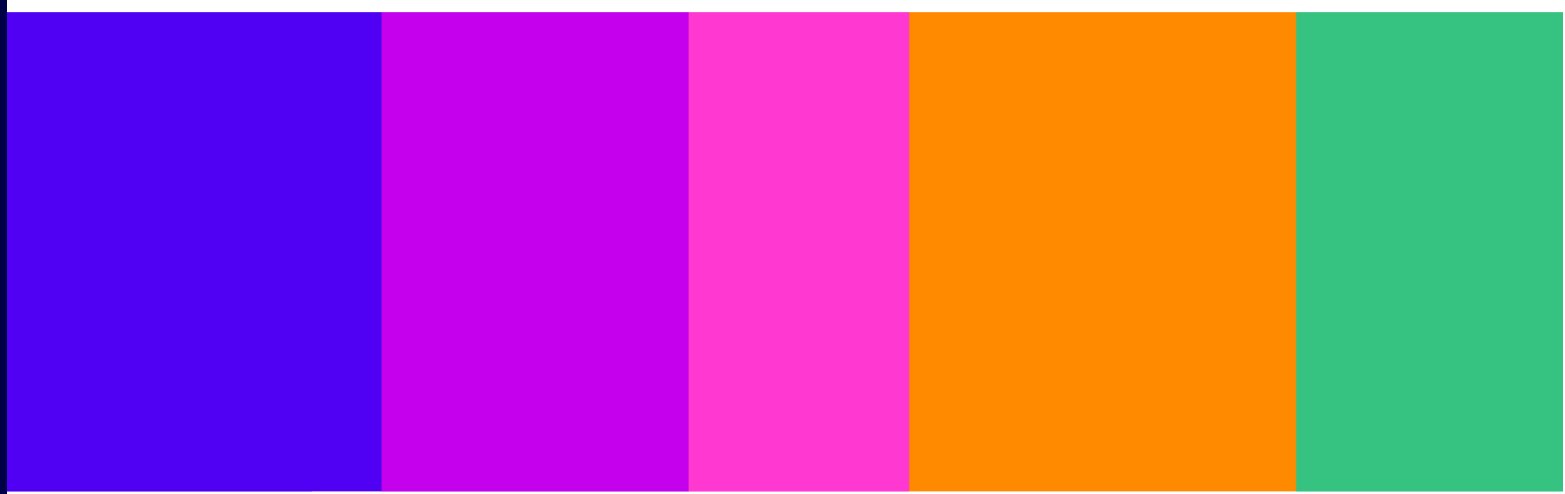
Statement

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Contents

Section

1. Overview....3

2. Introduction....4

3. Stakeholder feedback and our response....7

1. Overview

What is this Statement and Guidance about?

1.1 The Online Safety Act 2023 ('the Act') places duties on providers of relevant services relating to requests from bereaved parents for information about their deceased child's use of a service. The Deceased Child User duties ('the duties') in section 75 of the Act were informed by the experiences of bereaved parents who sought information from online services following the death of their child and encountered significant barriers in doing so. The purpose of the duties is to increase transparency and reduce uncertainty for bereaved parents seeking information and answers in these most difficult circumstances.

1.2 Under section 76 of the Act, Ofcom is required to produce guidance to help providers of relevant services understand and comply with these duties. In December 2025, we consulted on our proposed Guidance on the duties ('the Guidance'). This Statement sets out our decisions following that consultation, how we have considered feedback from respondents and our approach to the final Guidance.

1.3 Respondents were generally supportive of our proposals, and there were relatively few points of disagreement. We have therefore broadly maintained the approach on which we consulted.

1.4 Respondents also suggested a number of additions to the Guidance. In considering the suitability of these suggestions we have had regard to the scope and purpose of the duties and the objectives underpinning our approach. We have also considered whether suggestions should be reflected as additional good practice, where they are sufficiently connected to the duties and would improve the experience of bereaved parents.

Ofcom's decisions

1.5 Following consultation, we are broadly confirming the approach set out in our proposed Guidance. We have made a limited number of changes to our good practice recommendations concerning **a)** communication with bereaved parents where responsibility for handling a request changes; **b)** information about the availability of the support function, including any operating hours and anticipated response times, where this would help bereaved parents understand when they can expect to receive support; and **c)** recommendations about whether the information disclosed in response to a request may be redacted and, where relevant, circumstances in which this may occur.

1.6 These good practice recommendations are additional to the steps we recommend providers of relevant services take to comply with the duties. We have not otherwise made recommendations on the wider operational matters raised by respondents summarised in Annex 1. The final Guidance is published alongside this Statement. The deceased child user duties will come into force on **11 November 2026, from which date providers of relevant services will be required to comply with them.**

2. Introduction

Legal Context

2.1 The duties in the Act apply to regulated user-to-user services, search services and combined services with links to the UK that are listed on the register of categorised services. [1] We refer to these services as 'relevant services'. Further information on how services are categorised and included in the register can be found on our website.

2.2 The duties require providers of relevant services to:

a) Make it clear in the terms of service what their policy is about dealing with requests from parents of a deceased child for information about their child's use of the service[2];
b) Include clear and accessible provisions in the terms of service:
    i) Specifying the procedure for parents of a deceased child to request information about the child's use of the service;
    ii) Specifying what evidence (if any) the provider will require about the parent's identity or relationship to the child; and
    iii) Giving sufficient detail to enable child users and their parents to be reasonably certain about what kinds of information would be disclosed and how information would be disclosed;
c) Respond in a timely manner to requests from parents of a deceased child for information about the child's use of the service or for updates about the progress of such information requests;
d) Have a dedicated helpline, section of the service or some similar means by which parents can easily find out what they need to do to obtain information and updates in those circumstances, and provide details in the terms of service;
e) Operate a complaints procedure in relation to the service that:
    i) Allows for complaints to be made by parents of a deceased child who consider that the provider is not complying with the deceased child user duties;
    ii) Provides for appropriate action to be taken by the provider of the service in response to such complaints; and
    iii) Is easy to access, easy to use and transparent; and
f) Include in the terms of service provisions which are easily accessible specifying the policies and processes that govern the handling and resolution of such complaints.

2.3 Under section 76 of the Act, Ofcom is required to provide guidance to assist providers of relevant services in complying with the duties. This statement focuses on our final guidance in accordance with that duty.

2.4 Annex 2 sets out the wider legal framework relevant to our decisions, including our general duties and the matters to which we are required to have regard in carrying out

[1] Ofcom Register of Categorised Services

[2] In accordance with section 75(10) of the Act, and in this Statement, "parent", in relation to a child, includes any person who is not the child's parent but who (a) has parental responsibility for the child within the meaning of section 3 of the Children Act 1989 or Article 6 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (SI 1995/75 (N.I 2)), or (b) has parental responsibilities in relation to the child within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

our functions. It also explains our duty to act compatibly with the Human Rights Act 1998, including the rights to freedom of expression and privacy, and our approach to the relevant impact assessments.

Background to this Statement

2.5 In developing our proposals, we sought evidence about the experiences of bereaved parents seeking information about their child's use of online services. Following our May 2024 Call for Evidence, we invited bereaved parents to participate in a workshop on 24 June 2025 and an interview on 17 July 2025. This engagement helped us understand the challenges they encounter when seeking information from relevant services, and how the duties could improve their experience in the future.

2.6 This engagement, together with responses to our Call for Evidence[3] and desk research, informed our proposals and highlighted the importance of clear, accessible and sensitive processes for bereaved parents seeking information. We thank the bereaved parents who participated for sharing their experiences and for their determination to drive positive change for other families.

2.7 In December 2025, we consulted on our proposed Guidance to assist providers of relevant services in complying with the duties. We received five consultation responses from stakeholders, including online services, an online service industry coalition, a regulator, civil society and academia.

2.8 We received a limited amount of feedback and, overall, respondents were broadly supportive of our proposed approach to the Guidance, including our recommendations for compliance and good practice.[4] Much of the feedback suggested additions to, or further detail in, the Guidance and there were relatively few areas of disagreement with our specific proposals.

2.9 Some of these suggestions related directly to the duties, our proposals and/or the good practice recommendations on which we consulted. We address this feedback in Section 3. Respondents also made wider suggestions about how providers of relevant services might handle requests from bereaved parents Annex 1 provides a summary of this feedback.

2.10 The remainder of this Statement sets out the duties, the objectives underpinning our approach and a summary of our proposals (Section 2)

Our objectives for the Guidance

2.11 As set out in the December 2025 Consultation, the Guidance is intended to provide relevant services with a practical framework for complying with the duties and to improve the experience of bereaved parents seeking information, regardless of a provider's policy on disclosure. We proposed three objectives for the Guidance:

a) **Clarity and Transparency**: help relevant services ensure clarity and transparency for bereaved parents from the earliest point at which they seek to request information, so that parents understand what they can expect through the process;

[3] Ofcom Call for evidence: Third phase of online safety regulation (March 2024)
[4] Ofcom Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties (December 2025)

b) **Dignity and respect**: support relevant services in ensuring that bereaved parents are treated with dignity and respect throughout their engagement, and that relevant services adopt a humane and sensitive approach to these interactions; and

c) **Alleviating the burden on bereaved parents**: help providers understand how they can alleviate the burden on bereaved parents by making the process of requesting information as straightforward and supportive as possible.

Summary of our proposals at consultation

2.12 In the December 2025 Consultation, we proposed steps that providers of relevant services should take to comply with the duties, together with additional good practice recommendations intended to support the objectives set out above. The Act requires relevant services to have policies in place but does not require relevant services to disclose information to bereaved parents or prescribe what a provider's policy on disclosure must be. Our proposals therefore focused on helping providers comply with the duties relating to transparency, accessibility, support, timely responses and complaints.

2.13 In summary, our proposed Guidance explained how providers of relevant services should approach compliance with these duties. This included the level of detail required in relation to the information which providers need to include in their terms of service; how to make that information clear, accessible and easy to find; the purpose of the support function; how they should approach the requirement to respond in a timely manner; and operate their complaints procedures. The proposed Guidance also recognised the flexibility providers have in determining how to implement these requirements in practice.

2.14 Alongside these recommendations for compliance with the duties, we proposed additional good practice intended to improve bereaved parents' experience of the process of making a request or seeking an update. This included recommendations for providers to: communicate sensitively and in line with principles of trauma-informed practice; acknowledge requests and provide information about what parents can expect; avoid requiring parents to repeat information unnecessarily; consider setting and monitoring performance targets; provide additional useful information through the support function; and ensure that those handling complaints engage with bereaved parents with appropriate sensitivity.

3. Stakeholder feedback and our response

3.1 In this section, we consider feedback relating directly to our objectives and proposals for how providers of relevant services can comply with the duties and our recommendations for good practice. We have grouped the feedback around the main components of our proposals, reflecting the areas respondents commented on, rather than addressing each individual element of the duties separately.

Objectives for the guidance

3.2 We have decided to maintain the three objectives on which we consulted to (1) promote clarity and transparency for bereaved parents; (2) ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect, and (3) alleviate their burden when seeking information.

What respondents said

3.3 Respondents who commented on our proposed objectives were supportive of them. Pinterest agreed with our proposals, describing them as appropriate and practical and they were supportive of the objectives we proposed for the Guidance.[5] Another respondent welcomed the objectives of improving transparency and clarity for bereaved parents and reducing uncertainty and distress. [6]

3.4 Dr Edina Harbinja was also supportive of the proposed objectives but suggested that we include an additional objective concerning the protection of the deceased child's privacy and the privacy of third parties, including by ensuring that any disclosure of information is necessary and proportionate.[7]

Our response

3.5 We have considered Dr Harbinja's suggestion that the Guidance should include an additional objective concerning the protection of the privacy of the deceased child and third parties. The purpose of the duties is to require relevant services to provide clear information about their policy and processes for responding to requests. The duties do not require relevant services to have a policy providing for disclosure, nor do they stipulate any particular information to be disclosed or the approach to any such disclosure. Accordingly, we have decided not to include the suggested further objective.

3.6 We have nevertheless considered specific feedback on the potential impact of our decisions on relevant rights, including the right to privacy, as part of our updated rights

[5] 5Rights response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1; Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1.; [✂]; Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1.
[6] 5Rights response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1; Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1.; [✂]; Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1.
[7] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p.1.

assessment of the final Guidance in Annex 3. We have also considered Dr Harbinja's privacy related feedback where it relates to specific recommendations in the Guidance, including in relation to the information providers give about disclosure and redaction, as discussed at section 3.17.

What providers should include in the terms of service

3.7 The Act requires providers of relevant services to include specified information in their terms of service.[8] This includes their policy for dealing with requests from bereaved parents; the procedure for making a request; any evidence they may require about a parent's identity or relationship to the child; and sufficient detail to enable child users and their parents to be reasonably certain about what kinds of information would be disclosed and how information would be disclosed.

3.8 We have decided to maintain our overall approach to the information providers should include in their terms of service for compliance with the duties, including our recommendations for good practice. In response to feedback, we have expanded our good practice recommendations to encourage providers to explain not only what information would not be disclosed, but also whether information may be disclosed in redacted form and the circumstances in which redactions may be applied.

What respondents said

3.9 Respondents generally supported our approach to the information relevant services should include in their terms of service. One service provider welcomed the recognition that services retain discretion about the substance of their disclosure policy, and the legal importance of this.[9]

3.10 Dr Harbinja supported requiring relevant services to specify their disclosure policy in their terms of service but considered that they should adopt a restrictive interpretation of information about the child's use of a service and identify categories of information that are eligible for disclosure and those that are protected, rather than providing a general statement about disclosure.[10]

3.11 Pinterest commented more broadly on where the information required by the duties should be presented on a service. It considered that the level of detail required would be clearer, more accessible and user-friendly if provided through a dedicated Help Centre article, where it could be easily located by users and non-users through search engines, rather than through clauses and sub-sections in the terms of service.[11]

3.12 Respondents also commented on the information relevant providers should give about the process for making a request and any evidence that may be required. One respondent said it supported helping parents understand what steps are required to make a request and what evidence may be needed. It also emphasised that relevant providers should retain flexibility to determine their evidential requirements, including where necessary to address security, privacy or verification concerns, and to use robust

[8] For the purposes of the duties, for certain regulated search and combined services (that meet the Category 2A conditions), 'terms of service' also includes a publicly available statement.
[9] [✂]
[10] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.4
[11] Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance - Deceased Child User Duties, p. 2.

verification processes or recognised legal channels where appropriate.[12] 5Rights considered that Ofcom should provide greater specificity about evidential requirements, including the types of evidence relevant providers should be permitted to request and clearer guidance on what would constitute a proportionate level of identification for a bereaved parent, developed in collaboration with the Information Commission. Dr Harbinja supported our good practice recommendation that relevant providers consider accepting different forms of evidence beyond government-issued identification, noting that this could better reflect the diversity of family structures.[13]

3.13 On the requirement to provide sufficient detail about the kinds of information that may be disclosed and how, Dr Harbinja agreed that providing sufficient detail was important for both parents and children. She considered that this should include an explanation of any redaction processes, including where information such as third-party identifiers would be redacted.[14] She also considered that relevant should clearly identify categories of information that would and would not be eligible for disclosure.[15]

3.14 Respondents also suggested that relevant providers include further information in their terms of service about the operation of their support function.[16] [17]

Our response

3.15 We have considered Dr Harbinja's suggestion that providers should explain how redaction may affect information disclosed to bereaved parents. Our proposed Guidance already recommends that providers explain the kinds of information they would not disclose in any circumstances. We consider that there is also value in providing clarity where information may be disclosed subject to redaction. We have therefore added good practice recommending that, where relevant, providers should consider explaining whether information disclosed in response to a request may be redacted and the circumstances in which this may occur.

3.16 In response to Pinterest, the duties expressly require specified information to be included in a provider's terms of service.[18] Providers should therefore follow our Guidance on how they can comply with these requirements.[19] This does not prevent providers from also making information available through other channels. We consider our recommendations on the clarity and accessibility of this information in section 3.22-3.26 – 4.36.

3.17 We received no specific comments on our proposals regarding the information that should be included about the procedure for making a request. We therefore maintain our proposed approach to compliance and recommended good practice on this.

3.18 The Act does not empower us to specify particular types of evidence services should accept, and this is reflected in our Guidance. Providers can determine their own evidential requirements, which may be informed by security, privacy or verification

[12] [✂]
[13] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.4.
[14] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.4.
[15] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.4.
[16] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.13.
[17] 5Rights response to the December 2025 Consultation: Guidance – Deceased Child User Duties, p.7.
[18] Section 75(1) and 75(3) of the Act
[19] Ofcom Deceased Child User Duties Guidance

considerations as considered necessary. We have also considered 5Rights' suggestion that we provide further guidance on what constitutes a proportionate level of identification. However, given that providers' evidential and verification requirements may vary according to the circumstances and nature of their services, we have decided to maintain our proposed approach. This includes our good practice recommendation that providers consider accepting a range of forms of identification, taking into account accessibility requirements and the diversity of users and their parents.

3.19 We have also maintained our approach to providing sufficient detail about disclosure. The duties already require providers to give sufficient detail to enable child users and their parents to be reasonably certain about the kinds of information that may be disclosed and how.[20]

3.20 We continue to recommend as good practice that providers explain the kinds of information they would not disclose in any circumstances. This can help reduce uncertainty by enabling parents to understand, before the disclosure process begins, what information they can expect to receive. We address Dr Harbinja's related feedback on privacy in our rights assessment in Annex 3.

3.21 We consider respondents' suggestions about the information providers should give about the operation of their support function in section 3.50-3.55 – 3.33.

Clarity and accessibility

3.22 The Act require providers to set out clearly and accessibly in their terms of service how to make a request, the evidence that may be required, the kinds of information that may be disclosed and how information would be disclosed.[21]

3.23 In our draft Guidance, we proposed that providers should lay out and format these provisions in a way that helps bereaved parents read and understand them and draft them to a reading age comprehensible to the youngest person permitted to use the service without parental or guardian consent. We also proposed that the provisions should be easy to find, clearly signposted to users and non-users, and compatible with assistive technologies.[22] These recommendations align with the approach to clarity and accessibility in our Illegal Content and Protection of Children Codes.[23]

3.24 As good practice, we proposed that providers use language that is sensitive to circumstances in which bereaved parents will engage with these provisions, and that the wording of relevant parts of their terms of service should be underpinned by the principles of trauma-informed practice.

3.25 We have decided to maintain our overall approach to clarity and accessibility.

What respondents said

3.26 Respondents generally supported the importance of clear and accessible information. One respondent noted the importance of clarity in reducing uncertainty for bereaved

[20] Section 75(3)(c) of the Act.
[21] Section 75(3)(a)-(c)- of the Act
[22] Ofcom The Deceased Child User Duties Guidance, section 3.15 – 3.19, p.11.
[23] Ofcom Illegal Content Codes of Practice, measures ICU G4 and ICS G3; Protection of Children Codes of Practice, measures PCU G3 and PCS G3.

parents[24] Pinterest similarly emphasised the importance of transparency, accessibility and clarity.[25]

3.27 Dr Harbinja supported a clear and accessible approach and suggested a number of additional measures to improve accessibility for bereaved parents and child users. These included the use of plain, empathetic and non-technical language; making relevant information easy to locate without requiring access to the deceased child's account; providing information in accessible formats and commonly used languages; and using age-appropriate summaries and visual or explanatory aids where appropriate.[26]

3.28 One respondent highlighted the limitations of simplifying legal or technical language while maintaining accuracy, seeking to retain flexibility in how they communicate while also ensuring such communications are clear and accessible.[27]

Our Response

3.29 We recognise one respondents' suggestion that some legal or technical concepts may not be capable of further simplification without affecting accuracy. Our recommendations do not require providers to remove terminology where it is necessary to communicate information accurately. Providers retain flexibility in how they communicate such information, provided that the relevant provisions remain clear and accessible overall.

3.30 We agree with the underlying aims of Dr Harbinja's suggestions on accessibility, clarity and sensitive communication. Our existing recommendations address these matters by recommending that relevant provisions are easy to find and clearly signposted to the public, including people who do not use or are not signed up to the service; are readable and appropriately formatted; are compatible with assistive technologies; and are drafted to an appropriate reading age. Our good practice recommendation that relevant wording should be underpinned by the principles of trauma-informed practice also recognises the circumstances in which bereaved parents will engage with this information. We consider that these recommendations provide services with appropriate flexibility over the particular formats, tools and presentation methods they use.

3.31 We do not consider it necessary to recommend specific language requirements. This is consistent with our approach in the Illegal Content and Protection of Children Codes, which does not prescribe the languages in which relevant information should be made available. [28]

Responding in a timely manner

3.32 The duties require providers to respond in a timely manner to requests from parents for information about the deceased child's use of the service or for updates about the

[24] [✂]
[25] Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation, pp.1-2 and p.4
[26] Dr Edina Harbinja response to the December 2025 Consultation, p. 9.
[27] [✂]
[28] Ofcom Protection of Children Code of Practice for user-to-user services PCU C6 and Ofcom Illegal Harms Code of Practice for user-to-user services ICU 6.

progress of such information request.[29] The Act does not specify a particular timeframe or define what constitutes 'timely'.

3.33 In our draft Guidance, we did not propose fixed response times as the time required to respond may depend on the specific circumstances and the nature of the request. We proposed that providers should complete any internal activities and processes necessary to respond promptly and should then provide the response or update about the progress of a request without delay.[30]

3.34 We also proposed as good practice that providers should be clear in their policies about whether and how they will acknowledge requests. We further proposed that, where it is clear to a provider that it will not be providing information in response to a request, it should communicate this to the parent without delay.[31]

3.35 We have decided to maintain our approach of not prescribing a fixed timeframe for responding to requests and confirmed our good practice recommendation.

What respondents said

3.36 Pinterest supported our approach to determining what constitutes a timely response and agreed that the nature and extent of a request will affect the time needed to respond.[32] Another respondent highlighted the need to balance timeliness with other factors, such as accuracy and completeness.[33]

3.37 Dr Harbinja and 5Rights considered that the Guidance should provide greater specificity on timescales for responses. Dr Harbinja suggested a benchmark of 20 working days for an initial substantive response, immediate acknowledgement of requests and regular progress updates, for example every 10 days.[34] 5 Rights similarly considered that Ofcom should provide a recommended timeframe for substantive responses and specify intervals for interim updates, while recognising that the time needed to provide a substantive response may vary.[35]

3.38 We also received feedback on what should happen where information will not be provided. Dr Harbinja suggested that providers should give bereaved parents a clear explanation where information is withheld, including the reasons for non-disclosure, such as the protection of third-party privacy or the child's stated preferences.[36] Another respondent supported early communication when information could not be disclosed, but highlighted the need for flexibility to reflect circumstances.[37]

3.39 In relation to good practice, Pinterest did not oppose our recommendation that providers set performance targets. However, it cautioned against targets focused primarily on speed, which it considered could create incentives to prioritise rapid decision-making over the accuracy and quality of outcomes in sensitive cases.[38]

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[29] Section 75(4) of the Act and s75(3) (a)-(c).
[30] Ofcom Deceased Child User Duties Guidance, section 3.10 – 3.14, p. 10.
[31] Ofcom Deceased Child User Duties Guidance, section 3.10 – 3.14, p.10.
[32] Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation, p. 2.
[33] [✂]
[34] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, pp. 6-7.
[35] 5Rights response to December 2025 Consultation, p. 5.
[36] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, pp 18.
[37] [✂]
[38] Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation p. 2.

Our Response

3.40 The Act requires providers to respond in a timely manner but does not specify a particular timeframe. The nature and extent of requests, and the circumstances of providers may vary considerably. Our Guidance therefore recommends that providers complete any necessary internal activities and processes promptly and then provide a response without delay.

3.41 We have considered Dr Harbinja's and 5Rights' suggestions that the Guidance should specify or recommend a timeframe for substantive responses. We do not consider that a single benchmark would be appropriate given the diversity of services that are subject to the duties as outlined above. This approach also recognises respondents' concerns that timeliness should be considered alongside the need for responses to be comprehensive and accurate and to meet applicable legal requirements.

3.42 We have also considered whether to recommend, as good practice, that providers proactively provide updates at specified intervals. We do not consider that a fixed frequency would be appropriate given the different nature and circumstances of requests. Our Guidance instead recommends as good practice that providers are clear in their policies about whether and how they will acknowledge requests, while the duty requires providers to respond in a timely manner where a parent requests an update on the progress of their request.[39]

3.43 In relation to circumstances where information will not be provided, we continue to consider that the provider should communicate this to the bereaved parent without delay and explain why the information is not being provided. This does not require providers to give information that they cannot lawfully disclose, and allows them flexibility to explain the reasons for non-disclosure in a manner appropriate to the circumstances.

3.44 We have also considered Pinterest's comments about the risks of including performance targets. Our good practice recommendations are clear that, in setting response-time targets, providers should consider both the need to respond in a timely manner and the need for responses to be comprehensive and accurate. We therefore do not consider that the recommendation will result in services prioritising speed over quality or accuracy of responses.

Support Function

3.45 The duties require providers to operate a dedicated helpline, section of the service or similar means by which parents can easily find out what they need to do to obtain information about their deceased child's use of the service and obtain updates about a request.[40] Our draft guidance describes this as a 'support function'. Providers are also required to include provisions in their terms of service providing details about the support function.[41]

3.46 In our draft Guidance, we proposed that providers should have flexibility to determine the form of their support function, taking account of the nature of their service and how

[39] Section 75(4)
[40] Section 75(2)
[41] Section 75(2).

users interact with it, but that the terms of service should set out which support function is in place and where it is located. We also proposed good practice recommendations regarding additional information intended to support bereaved parents when using the support function.[42]

3.47 We have decided to maintain our overall approach of allowing providers flexibility to determine the form of their support function. We have however added a good practice recommending that, where responsibility for handling a request is transferred or escalated, providers consider informing the bereaved parent where this is relevant to their ongoing communications about the request.

What respondents said

3.48 Respondents agreed with the need for an effective support function, and some supported the flexibility in our proposed approach. Pinterest welcomed providers being able to decide the type of support function most appropriate for their service, and preferred adapting existing support channels rather than necessarily creating new ones.[43] Another respondent welcomed flexibility on the basis of the differences between services to which the duties will apply, and discretion for service to determine their approach to the duties accordingly.[44]

3.49 Other respondents suggested the Guidance should be more prescriptive about support. 5Rights recommended a consistent point of contact or team throughout the request process. Dr Harbinja recommended dedicated, trauma-informed support for bereaved parents, particularly for Category 1 services, alongside clear information about support availability, response times and the role of the support function. She also suggested measures such as named contacts or case identifiers to reduce the need for parents to repeat their circumstances, and information about how the support function would deal with situations where parents disagreed about accessing a child's information. [45] [46]

Our Response

3.50 We have considered the suggestions that providers should use a dedicated or consistent team or point of contact, including human support through channels such as live chat or telephone. We do not consider it necessary to recommend a particular staffing model or support channel. Providers may use existing or dedicated arrangements, provided that their support function meets the requirements of the duties. Our existing good practice on sensitive and trauma-informed communication already addresses how providers communicate with bereaved parents.

3.51 Whilst we recognise respondents' concerns about continuity and reducing the need for bereaved parents to repeatedly explain their circumstances, we do not consider it necessary to recommend case-management mechanisms, such as a named contact or case management arrangements, such as assigning a named contact or case identifier.

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[42] Ofcom Deceased Child User Duties Guidance, section 3.20 – 3.28, p.12.
[43] Pinterest response to the December 2025 Consultation, p.3.
[44] [✂]
[45] Dr Edina Harbinja's response to the December 2025 Consultation, p. 14 & p. 16.
[46] 5Rights response to December 2025 Consultation p. 2.

Providers remain free to adopt such arrangements where they consider it will support the objectives set out in this Guidance.

3.52 We also recognise respondents' concerns about continuity where responsibility for a request moves between individuals or teams, including the burden on bereaved parents of having to repeat information. We have therefore added good practice recommending that, where responsibility for handling a request is transferred or escalated, providers consider informing the bereaved parent where this is relevant to their ongoing communications about the request. This recommendation concerns communication with bereaved parents rather than how providers organise transfers or escalations internally.

3.53 We agree that bereaved parents should be able to understand the role of the support function. Its purpose under the duties is to enable parents to find out easily what they need to do to obtain information about their child's use of the service and to obtain updates about a request; it does not guarantee that information will ultimately be disclosed. Our Guidance reflects this distinction.

3.54 We also considered Dr Harbinja's suggestion concerning disagreements between parents about accessing a child's information. We do not consider it necessary to recommend particular arrangements, such as mediation or legal verification, for resolving such disagreements. We have also considered respondents' suggestions about information concerning availability of the support function. We consider that information about when support is available and when bereaved parents can expect a response may help them understand how and when they can access it. Our good practice already recommends that providers consider providing information about the availability of the support function, including any operating hours and anticipated response times.

3.55 Pinterest suggested that providers should be able to use a comprehensive Help Centre article, linked from their terms of service, to avoid duplicating information across the support function and terms of service. We recognise that providers may make information available through a Help Centre or other channels. As explained above, the duties require specified information about a provider's policy and the support function to be included in a provider's terms of service. Providers may use other channels alongside these arrangements, but these do not replace the applicable requirements of the duties.

Complaints

3.56 The duties require providers to operate a complaints procedure in relation to the deceased child user duties which is easy to access, easy to use and transparent, which allows for relevant complaints to be made, and which provides for appropriate action to be taken. Providers must also include in their terms of service provisions which are easily accessible and specify the policies and processes that govern complaints handling and resolution of complaints.[47]

3.57 In our draft Guidance, we proposed an approach broadly aligned with the practical requirements for complaints handling in our Illegal Content and Protection of Children

[47] Sections 75(5) and s75(6)

Codes. We did not propose that providers should be required to establish a separate complaints function specifically for complaints relating to the deceased child user duties.

3.58 We have decided to maintain our overall approach to complaints, including not recommending that providers establish a separate complaints function for complaints relating to the deceased child user duties. We consider that our approach allows providers to integrate these complaints into their existing systems while ensuring that the requirements applying to complaints under the duties are met.

What respondents said

3.59 We received a mix of views on our proposed approach from respondents. Pinterest supported our proposed approach, including alignment with the Illegal Content and Protection of Children Codes and our proposal not to require a separate complaints function.[48] It considered that a single complaints function would be more proportionate and could make the process easier for complainants to access and use.[49]

3.60 5Rights disagreed with our rationale for not specifying that providers of relevant service should implement a separate complaints function for bereaved parents.[50]

3.61 Dr Harbinja supported aligning the approach with the existing Codes but recommended that complaints about requests being ignored or information being withheld or redacted should be subject to senior human review. She also called for clear and accessible complaints policies, reasons to be given where information is not provided and review of complaints by someone who was not involved in the original decision, and suggested that providers should use complaints data to identify recurring issues and improve their processes.[51]

3.62 Pinterest considered that, where complaints are triaged and responded to promptly, a formal acknowledgement and detailed indicative timelines may provide additional limited benefit. It also cautioned against unnecessarily duplicating information about complaint handling and possible outcomes where this is already provided elsewhere.[52]

Our Response

3.63 We have considered 5Rights' suggestion that providers should establish a separate complaints function for bereaved parents. The duties require providers to operate a complaints procedure that enables complaints concerning compliance with the deceased child user duties to be made and provides for appropriate action to be taken in response. They do not prescribe a particular organisational model for that procedure. We consider it appropriate to allow providers to use or adapt existing arrangements, provided that these meet the requirements of the duties and take appropriate account of the circumstances in which bereaved parents may make complaints. We are therefore confirming our proposed approach.

3.64 We have considered Dr Harbinja's suggestions concerning the presentation of complaints information and the handling and review of complaints. Our existing

[48] Pinterest response to December 2025 Consultation pp. 3-4.
[49] Pinterest response to December 2025 Consultation pp. 3-4.
[50] 5Rights response to December 2025 Consultation p. 7.
[51] Dr Edina Harbinja response to December 2025 Consultation, p. 18 and 20.
[52] Pinterest response to December 2025 Consultation pp. 3-4.

recommendations address the clarity, readability, presentation and accessibility of the relevant terms of service provisions. We do not consider it necessary to recommend particular tools or formats, such as procedural maps or templates.

3.65 We also consider it appropriate for providers to retain flexibility over how their complaints procedures operate and how individual complaints are handled, provided that they meet the requirements of the duties. We have therefore not prescribed particular review arrangements, including senior manual review or review by a person who was not involved in the original decision. Our Guidance does not require providers to automate the consideration or resolution of complaints.

3.66 The Guidance explains that, to comply with the duty to respond in a timely manner, where requested information is not provided the provider should explain why. A bereaved parent may therefore complain where they receive no response, or where information is not provided and they do not receive an explanation. This does not mean that the complaints procedure must provide a right to challenge the substance of a provider's disclosure policy where the matter does not concern compliance with the deceased child user duties.

3.67 Finally, we do not consider it necessary to add good practice on providers' use of complaints data to improve their processes. Providers are best placed to determine how they review and improve their complaints processes, including what information they use to do so.