

Being Safe Online

Online Safety Act 2023



What is the Online Safety Act?

'a zero-tolerance approach to protecting children, meaning social media platforms will be legally responsible for the content they host and keeping children and young people safe online.'

<https://www.gov.uk/society-and-culture/online-safety>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/enacted>

“

The Online Safety Act is a landmark piece of legislation and is a real step forward in making the UK the safest place to be online as a child.”

Jess Edwards, Senior Policy Advisor

Who does it aim to protect?

EVERYONE, the mission is to create a safer life online for children and adults in the UK. The act aims to make the UK the safest place in the world online.

When did the Online Safety Act become law?

On Tuesday 19th September 2023, the Online Safety Bill passed its final Parliamentary debate and is now ready to become law. It is now formally recognised as the 'Online Safety Act'.

Who has responsibility to making the internet a safer place?

Social media platforms will be expected to:

- remove illegal content quickly or prevent it from appearing in the first place, including content promoting self-harm
- prevent children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content
- enforce age limits and age-checking measures
- ensure the risks and dangers posed to children on the largest social media platforms are more transparent, including by publishing risk assessments
- provide parents and children with clear and accessible ways to report problems online when they do arise



Support for adults:

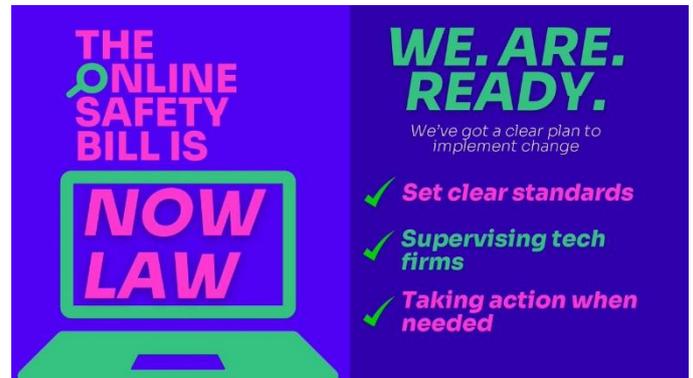
In addition to its firm protections for children, the act empowers adults to take control of what they see online. It provides three layers of protection for internet users which will:

1. Make sure illegal content will have to be removed.
2. Place a legal responsibility on social media platforms to enforce the promises they make to users when they sign up, through terms and conditions.
3. Offer users the option to filter out harmful content, such as bullying, that they do not want to see online.

If social media platforms do not comply with these rules, Ofcom could fine them up to £18 million or 10% of their global annual revenue, whichever is biggest – meaning fines handed down to the biggest platforms could reach billions of pounds.

Let's make the internet a safer place together (some of the targets of the act and continued ongoing focus)

- Protect women and girls from online abuse
- Protect people from bullying online
- Tackle animal cruelty that can be found on social media
- Age verification processes on platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat
- Online Fraud
- Creating and sharing fake pictures
- Remove illegal content
- Easier ways to report and support for victims of online abuse
- The selling of drugs and weapons
- Revenge porn
- Hate speech
- Terrorism



Why has it taken so long for us to get the Online Safety Act and who has opposed it?

It comes following several delays due to controversy over its potential privacy implications.

Tech companies and those concerned about privacy laws has opposed the passing of the act. **Why?**

They had long expressed concerns about the rules around legal but harmful content, suggesting it would make them unfairly liable for material on their platforms.

'Much of the recent criticism from tech firms has centred around messaging encryption, **with major platforms like WhatsApp even threatening to leave the UK if they are forced to enable scanning texts.**'

<https://news.sky.com/story/what-is-the-online-safety-bill-who-is-in-favour-who-opposes-it-and-how-will-it-be-enforced-12964247>

Further reading

<https://www.gov.uk/society-and-culture/online-safety>

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2023/online-safety-ofcom-role-and-what-it-means-for-you>

<https://www.article19.org/resources/uk-online-safety-bill-serious-threat-to-human-rights-online/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2023/2023-09-19-the-online-safety-bill-has-been-passed-in-a-momentous-day-for-children/>

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/online-safety-bill-becomes-law>