

Reference: 01982738

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

9 May 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about investigations by the 'small but risky' taskforce.

We received this request on 8 April 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request and our response

On 11/09/2024, Dame Melanie Dawes wrote to the Secretary of State at DSIT outlining Ofcom's work to protect users from harmful content on 'small but risky' online services. She said Ofcom had "created a dedicated supervision taskforce for this purpose".

As of 08/04/2025:

- 1. How many investigations have been opened by that taskforce?*
- 2. Of the investigations relevant to question 1, please break down the themes they relate to (eg/ CSAM, terror, hate, offences directed against women and girls)*
- 3. Of the investigations relevant to question 1, how many are still open?*
- 4. Of the investigations that have closed, please break down the themes they relate to (eg/ CSAM, terror, hate, offences directed against women and girls)*
- 5. Of the investigations that have closed, please break down the result of those investigations (eg/ no action taken, compliance remediation undertaken, penalty imposed - if so how much?)*
- 6. Of the investigations that are still open, please break down the themes they relate to (eg/ CSAM, terror, hate, offences directed against women and girls)*

As explained in the letter to the Secretary of State at DSIT, the 'Small but Risky Services taskforce' ('SBRs') is a team within Ofcom's Supervision function which focuses on engaging with small but risky services to bring them into compliance with the Online Safety Act. It is actively targeting services that present a high risk of harm and will continue to develop further workplans based on high priority themes (such as terror, hate and offences directed against women and girls) .

The taskforce does not formally investigate services, but instead identifies high priority services and engages with them to understand their current levels of compliance and any further steps that are appropriate, which could include investigations undertaken by Ofcom's Enforcement team.

The Enforcement team, which is separate to (but works closely with) the SBRs taskforce and the broader Supervision group, is responsible for the enforcement of duties under the Online Safety Act. The duties in the Act come into force throughout 2025: duties on publishers of pornographic

material to implement highly effective age assurance came into force from January 2025; and duties for user-to-user and search services to tackle illegal content came into force on 17 March 2025. Duties to protect children from harmful content will come into force from July 2025.

The Enforcement team has a range of tools it may use, including the opening of investigations and broader enforcement programmes, which are targeted areas of work to address sector-wide compliance concerns, as well as more informal tools such as warning letters and engagement strategies.

To date, the Enforcement team has opened:

- (a) three enforcement programmes, focusing on: (i) [protecting children from encountering pornographic content through the use of age assurance](#), opened on 16 January 2025 (ii) [monitoring compliance with the illegal content risk assessment duties and record keeping duties](#), opened on 3 March 2025; and (iii) [measures being taken by file-sharing and file-storage services to prevent users from encountering or sharing child sexual abuse material \(CSAM\), opened](#) on 17 March 2025;¹²
- (b) one [investigation into a suicide forum](#), opened on 9 April 2025 We are investigating whether the service has failed/is failing to comply with its duties under the Online Safety Act 2023 to:
 - adequately respond to a statutory information request;
 - complete and keep a record of a suitable and sufficient illegal content risk assessment; and
 - comply with the safety duties about illegal content, the duties relating to content reporting and duties about complaints procedures, which apply in relation to regulated user-to-user services.
- (c) Further [investigations](#) into two pornographic services under rules to protect children online.

The evaluation of priorities is subject to continual review. We will typically update our website if we open further investigations in the future.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

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¹ As an example of where the SBRS taskforce and Enforcement teams work closely together, as stated in the 17 March 2025 CSAM enforcement programme opening text, the SBRS taskforce has played a significant role in identifying and engaging with providers of certain smaller file-sharing and file-storage services to discuss compliance and assess which services may already be taking appropriate measures.

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).