

Reference: 2068500

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

22 September 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about the costs of implementing the Online Safety Act.

We received this request on 26 August 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request and our response

1. *Whether any cost assessments have been conducted regarding the implementation of the next stages of the Online Safety Act.*

Each year, Ofcom publishes an [Annual Plan of Work](#), which details our priorities, reflecting our legal duties, including under the Online Safety Act, and how its delivery will be supported by our projects and programmes. The budget for the financial year reflects the cost assessment of the annual Plan of Work, and we do not expect any material movements in our budget.

2. *If so, a breakdown of these cost assessments.*

The budget for the current financial year has been agreed by Ofcom's Board, including for costs attributed to the Online Safety regulation. For further information about 2025/26 Planned expenditure by sector, including for Online Safety, please refer to our 2025/26 Tariff tables (page 21) on this at [Ofcom Tariff Tables 2025-26](#). For a breakdown of costs by spend type, please refer to our [2024/25 Annual Report](#) (page 61), the year-on-year proportion of spend by type remains broadly the same.

3. *If the cost assessments predict increased costs as a result of the Online Safety Act, details on how Ofcom and the government plan to budget for this increase.*

Where the statute allows for it, Ofcom recovers fees and charges from the sectors it regulates, in line with our cost recovery methodology. For further information about online safety fees, please refer to our statement on this at [Statement on Online Safety fees and penalties](#).

4. *What the additional cost, if any, will be for the running of Ofcom's new monitoring and income programme.*

Ofcom doesn't recognise the term 'monitoring and income' programme. However, to hold sites and apps to account, we have launched a 'monitoring and impact programme', the

details of which can be found here: [Online age checks now in force - Ofcom](#). This work will be taken up by Ofcom's existing online safety teams, and therefore the costs sit within Ofcom's existing Online Safety budget.

5. *The cost for Ofcom of launching investigations into companies found in breach of the new regulations.*

The [Online Safety Enforcement Guidance](#) sets out how Ofcom will normally approach enforcement under the Online Safety Act 2023. The process that we follow when opening and conducting investigations under the Act is detailed in Sections 5 and 6 of this guidance. The cost of each investigation will vary depending on the resources allocated to each case.

6. *The cost for social media platforms and online sites to introduce the more robust age assurance techniques.*

Please refer to the [impact assessment](#) published alongside the codes for Protecting children from harms online, in particular A3.14-A3.48 which outlines the age assurance cost analysis.

7. *The cost for Ofcom of monitoring and removing 'primary priority content' across social media platforms and online sites.*

Ofcom's functions and duties under the Online Safety Act 2023 are to make sure that regulated services take appropriate steps to protect their users by improving the systems providers use to prevent harm. We do not require providers to remove particular posts, images or videos. Further information about Ofcom's functions and duties under the Act can be found on our [website](#).

8. *Any predicted costs for Ofcom of taking serious breaches of the online safety act to court.*

In most cases, we expect the enforcement action we take without any court intervention, to be sufficient to bring a service provider into compliance and to deter further breaches. Section 9 of the Online Safety Enforcement guidance provides details on exceptional instance where Ofcom may apply to a court for a Business disruption measure (BDM). Ofcom has not made any BDM applications to date, and the cost of any such application will vary depending on the resources allocated to it.

9. *The cost of researching Ofcom's 'Children's Online Passive Measurement' study (linked here<<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/childrens-passive-online-measurement>>).*

Research underpins everything we do at Ofcom. We have invested in an extensive programme of research to date to inform our Online Safety work, which we publish regularly on the [Ofcom website](#). We continue to broaden our multidisciplinary evidence base to keep up to date with relevant changes as technologies evolve. More information about our research programme and our areas of interest for future research can be found in our [Online Safety Research Agenda](#).

The spend on this contract is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43(2) of the FOI Act. This exemption deals with information that, if disclosed, would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person including the public authority holding it. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information. Annex

A attached to this letter sets out the exemption in full, as well as the factors Ofcom considered when deciding where the public interest lay.

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,

Information Requests

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](#).

Section 43(2) of the Act provides that:

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

Factors for disclosure	Factors for withholding
• Enabling the public to gain a better understanding of the commercial relationships between Ofcom and its suppliers and thereby increasing public confidence in Ofcom. • Generally, there is a public interest in transparency of expenditure, especially if public funds are involved	• Ofcom contracts with a number of companies and has a financial relationship with them. Companies need to be confident that information relating to their business, such as information about them as an organisation or relating to their products or services, will not be disclosed if it would, or would be likely to, prejudice their commercial interests. • Ofcom continues to negotiate and require contracts like those related to this request. To release the cost would put Ofcom in a detrimental position for future contract negotiations and would undermine its bargaining position with potential suppliers. In addition, to release the amount Ofcom pays for a service could prejudice the commercial interests of the supplier – in that it would provide details of the supplier's commercial relationships to its competitors or potential contracts.

Reasons why public interest favours withholding information

- We consider that, on balance, the public interest in withholding disclosure of this information outweighs the public interest in disclosure.
- Ofcom enjoys a positive relationship with those companies it contracts with. The release of information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice commercial interests into the public domain would impair both Ofcom's relationship with providers of services, and adversely affect its commercial relationships with other contractors. If contractors could not be confident that such information provided by them to Ofcom would be withheld from disclosure, except in compelling circumstances, commercial activity may be impeded. Similarly, Ofcom's bargaining position, and therefore ability to obtain value for money in services it contracts for, may be undermined in future negotiations if full details about the cost of these services were disclosed. These considerations go against the public interest in disclosing.
- Weighing the issues presented, it is considered that on balance, the factors for withholding the requested information outweigh those for disclosing the information.