



ONLINE SAFETY ACT 2023

What You Should Know

WHAT IT IS

A UK law that makes online platforms legally responsible for tackling illegal and harmful content — especially to protect children.



WHO IT APPLIES TO

Covered services include:

- Social media platforms
- Search engines
- Video-sharing platforms
- Forums & communities
- Messaging services (in scope)
- Gaming & livestreaming platforms

Applies even if the company is outside the UK (if it has UK users)

THE 4 KEY DUTIES

Remove Illegal Content



Platforms must prevent, detect, and remove illegal content quickly.

Protect Children



Services must reduce children's exposure to harmful content and introduce stronger safeguards.

Safety by Design



Platforms must build safer systems into design, algorithms, and defaults.

Reporting & Transparency



Clear reporting routes, user protections, and accountability for how moderation works.

PENALTIES

Up to £18 million OR 10% of global turnover



Services can be restricted or blocked in the UK



Senior leaders may face liability in serious cases



WHO ENFORCES IT

Ofcom

The UK regulator responsible for guidance, codes of practice, and enforcement.

KEY DEBATES



Risk of over-moderation and reduced freedom of expression



Compliance costs hit smaller platforms hardest



Age assurance raises data protection concerns (ID checks, biometrics, tracking)



Privacy vs safety tensions, especially around encrypted services