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▶ [Advice for consumers \(https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/advice-for-consumers\)](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/advice-for-consumers)

▶ [Regulating video-sharing platforms: what you need to know](#)

Regulating video-sharing platforms: what you need to know



09 April 2021

The government introduced legislation in autumn 2020 giving Ofcom powers to regulate UK-established video-sharing platforms (VSPs). These powers came into force on 1 November 2020.

Under the new regulations, VSPs must have measures in place to protect under-18s from potentially harmful content and all users from criminal content, and incitement to hatred and violence. VSPs will also need to make sure standards around advertising are met.

For more information on the regulations, [read our guide \(PDF, 237.9 KB\)](#)

(https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/205167/regulating-vsp-guide.pdf).

What is a video-sharing platform?



Video-sharing platforms are a type of online video service. They allow users to upload and share videos with other people and engage with a wide range of content and social features.

What new powers does Ofcom have to keep video-sharing platforms in check?



The UK Government introduced new legislation giving Ofcom powers to regulate UK-established video-sharing platforms. These powers came into force on 1 November 2020.

Our job is to make sure VSPs which fall within our jurisdiction take appropriate measures to protect under-18s from potentially harmful content and all users from illegal content and incitement to hatred and violence.

We'll be developing regulatory guidance on the risks of harm to users and the measures VSPs should take to mitigate them. We are currently [consulting on this guidance](#)

(<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-1/guidance-vsp-harmful-material-measures>).

You can read more about our approach in our [short guide \(PDF, 237.9 KB\)](#)

(https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/205167/regulating-vsp-guide.pdf).

Which video-sharing platforms fall under Ofcom's jurisdiction? —

VSPs must self-assess whether they fall under the regulations and come under UK jurisdiction, and they then must notify Ofcom by 6 May 2021. We have [published guidance](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation/guidance-who-to-notify-to-ofcom) (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation/guidance-who-to-notify-to-ofcom>) to help them do this.

What penalties could video-sharing platforms face if they break the rules? —

If VSPs break the rules, we can enforce a financial penalty of up to 5% of their qualifying revenue or £250k (whichever is greater).

Does this mean you'll be censoring content on the internet? —

No. Freedom of expression is central to our democracy, values and modern society. We do not have powers or duties to moderate content – such as removing individual videos. Our role is to make sure regulated services are taking the appropriate steps to protect their users from harmful content, such as incitement to hatred and violence.

We'll be making sure the measures VSPs adopt to protect users are appropriate and proportionate, taking into account the legitimate interests at stake. If the measures taken by platforms are found not to be effective in protecting users from harmful content, we'll take action, including formal enforcement action when appropriate.

Can I now complain to Ofcom about harmful content on video-sharing platforms? —

While Ofcom is the regulator of video-sharing platforms from 1 November 2020, we are currently in the implementation period of the regime until our formal guidance is published later this year.

During this implementation period, Ofcom will be regularly engaging with video-sharing platforms and the wider industry, other regulators, and consumer groups and charities. We will also be conducting ongoing research on user experiences.

Later this year we will start accepting complaints from the public about VSPs in scope of our regulation. Our role is to make sure providers have appropriate measures in place to protect users. Complaints from the public will help identify potential issues with compliance but we do not resolve individual complaints.

You should always complain directly to the video-sharing platform in question if you have concerns about harmful content on the platform.

How does regulation of video-sharing platforms fit with the Government's proposals for broader online harms legislation? —

Regulation of UK-established video-sharing platforms will be in place until the Government's proposed new online harms regime comes into force. The Government's broader online harms legislation is expected to apply to a much wider range of online services, including services which are not based in the UK. Last year, the Government announced that it intends appoint Ofcom as the online harms regulator.

You can read about the Government's plans in its [response to the Online Harms White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>).



See also...

Video-sharing platform (VSP) regulation (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation>)

6 April 2021

Advice for Businesses

A starter pack for businesses (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice-for-businesses/inexperienced-digital-users>)

Knowing your rights (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice-for-businesses/knowning-your-rights>)

Disabled business customers (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice-for-businesses/help-for-disabled-business-customers>)

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