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A guide to the regulation of video-sharing platforms



21 October 2020

We have [today published a guide \(https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation\)](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation) to the new regulations for video-sharing platforms (VSPs) that are based in the UK.

VSPs are a type of online video service where users can upload and share videos. They allow users to engage with a wide range of content and social features.

Under the new regulations, VSPs must have appropriate measures in place to protect children 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.

Today's guide is designed to help UK-based VSPs understand their new obligations and sets out our approach to carrying out our new duties.

We will work with potential VSPs to help them understand the steps they should take to make sure they comply with the regulations. We will also be developing and consulting on further guidance on the risks of harm to users and the measures services should take to mitigate them.

We understand the Government's intention is that VSP regulation will be in place until the new Online Harms regime comes into force.

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 in autumn 2020 giving Ofcom powers to regulate UK-based 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 children from potentially harmful content and all users from illegal content and incitement to hatred and violence. 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) (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. Our role is to make sure regulated services are taking the appropriate steps to protect 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. If they're not, we'll take action.

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 next year.

During this period, 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-based video-sharing platforms is temporary. It 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. Earlier this year, the Government said it is minded to appoint Ofcom as the online harms regulator.

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



Related content

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

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