

## MEDIA REPORT 7

### Summary

In the AP News article, “UK’s new online safety law adds to crackdown on Big Tech companies” written by Kelvin Chan, it is reporting on how UK lawmakers approved an ambitious and controversial internet safety law that will crack down on big social media companies like TikTok, Google, and Meta. The government states that the online safety bill will make the UK the safest place in the world to be online. This new law is the UK’s contribution to clamp down on the freewheeling tech industry dominated by US companies, while the European Union has the Digital Services Act which has similar provisions to clean up social media. This new law requires social media platforms to take down illegal content(including child sexual abuse), hate speech and terrorism, revenge porn, and post promoting self-harm. This will stop such content from appearing in the first place and give users more control (such as blocking anonymous trolls). This law also takes a “zero tolerance” approach to protecting kids by making social media platforms legally responsible for their online safety. To make do this, platforms will be required to stop children from accessing content that could be harmful or not age-appropriate, such porn, bullying, glorifying eating disorder, or providing instructions for suicide. This law will also criminalize some online activity such as cyberflashing(sending someone unwanted explicit images).

The law will apply to any internet company no matter where it's based and companies that don't follow these new laws will face fines of up to 18 million pounds(\$22 million) or 10% of annual global sales. The senior managers at tech companies will also face criminal prosecution and prison time if they fail to answer information requests from UK regulators. They will also be held criminally liable if their company fails to comply with resgulators's notices about child sex abuse and exploitation. A UK communications regulator Ofcom will enforce the law by focusing on illegal content as the government takes a “phased approach” to bring it into force. The

UK-based Open Rights Group and the Electronic Frontier Foundation in the US stated that if tech companies have to ensure content is not harmful to children, they could end up being forced to choose between sanitizing their platforms or making users verify their ages by uploading official ID or using privacy-intrusive face scans to estimate how old they are. This law would also set up a clash between the British government and tech companies over encryption technology because it gives regulators the power to require encrypted messaging services to install “accredited technology” to scan encrypted messages for terrorist or child sex abuse content. Meta has also stated that they plan to start adding end-to-end encryption to all Messenger chats by default by the end of the year. But the UK government called on the company to not do so without measures to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

### Personal Opinion

Overall, I strongly agree with the fact that the UK lawmakers have approved the internet safety law because this new law will make the internet a safer place especially for children because it will require social media platforms to take down illegal content, hate speech, revenge porn, and post promoting self-harm. Without this regulation, internet users(especially children) will experience these kinds of content that will alter how they view the world and will negatively affect their behavior by depriving kids of important social cues they would usually learn through in-person communication. As a result, the kids will be more callous, anxious, and insecure. I find that this law also makes social media companies responsible because if the companies don't comply, they can face fines of up to 18 million pounds or 10% of annual global sales. The senior managers at tech companies will also face criminal prosecution and prison time if they fail to answer information requests from UK regulators.

### Citation

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<https://apnews.com/article/online-safety-bill-uk-tech-regulation-4371bbb0d7442eed0f44bf7839443268>