



**Adult  
Content  
Standards**



**IWF**  
Internet  
Watch  
Foundation

EFFECTIVELY TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ONLINE:

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# A Standard of **Good Practice** for Adult Services



**Working together to  
STOP child sexual abuse  
on adult content websites**

## Overview

This document sets out the conditions that must be met by adult services who wish to apply for full membership of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). It is based on an approach that allows provisional membership for one year for those companies that meet the **Basic Standard** (as set out below).

Companies would then be eligible for full membership if they reached the additional requirements of the **Higher Standard** (as set out below).

In the case of all applications, an independent auditing of individual companies' compliance with the standard would be required before the IWF accepts or rejects an application. The IWF and its expert advisory board are consulting on third-party auditors, which will be announced in due course. The IWF intends to conduct an annual review of the standard to ensure it is relevant and effective in addressing evolving challenges and changes to the online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) landscape.

## A. Principles

The Advisory Board has set out six principles for adult services for tackling child sexual abuse (CSA), to apply in all countries where services are provided, across all sites:

1

**Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to child sexual abuse.**

2

**Ensure transparency, with enforceable terms of service.**

3

**Operate with accountability, with clear reporting mechanisms.**

4

**Embrace technological tools and solutions.**

5

**Collaborate with specialists.**

6

**Embrace regulatory and safety initiatives, including voluntary principles.**

## B. Specific steps to achieve good practice

### Baseline Standard

- a. Adult services must comply with legislation and regulations<sup>1</sup>. This includes requirements to assess the level of risk on their services and embrace safety by design as an approach to mitigate harms in the configuration of their platform or service.
- b. Adult services must adopt mechanisms to detect and prevent known child sexual abuse material (CSAM), as deemed appropriate by the IWF.
- c. Adult services must ensure that they do not carry any materials in breach of the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) standards for an R18 certification, including:
  - Material which is in breach of the criminal law;
  - Material (including dialogue) likely to encourage an interest in sexually abusive activity which may include adults role-playing as non-adults;
  - The portrayal of sexual activity which involves real or apparent lack of consent; any form of physical restraint which prevents participants from indicating a withdrawal of consent;
  - The infliction of pain or acts which are likely to cause serious physical harm, whether real or (in a sexual context) simulated. Some allowance may be made for non-abusive, consensual activity;
  - Penetration by any object likely to cause physical harm;
- And sexual threats, humiliation or abuse which do not form part of a clearly consenting role-playing game.
- d. Adult services must publish transparency reports every six months<sup>2</sup>.
- e. Adult services must establish and maintain a dedicated portal to facilitate accessible and secure communication between law enforcement and the platform regarding specific investigations, ensuring a channel for victim redress is readily available.
- f. Adult services must have a clear reporting function for users to flag harmful content<sup>3</sup>.
- g. Adult services must subject anyone visiting, publishing, or appearing in material on the platform to age verification measures to confirm they are over 18 years old at the time of production before content is permitted to be published<sup>4</sup>.
- h. Adult services must ensure that consent is secured for all individuals appearing in content. All individuals must be allowed to withdraw consent at any time. Cases which involve professional contracts should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- i. Adult services must not support technologies that obscure the content of messaging and other communications that would inhibit moderation.
- j. Adult services must not adopt, or encourage the adoption of, technologies that can be used to bypass content filtering and content blocking mechanisms, whether for accessing their services or hosting them.

1. Legal requirement: Implicit

2. Legal Requirement: Digital Services Act. Article 24 (2)

3. Legal Requirement: Online Safety Act, Part 3, Section 20, Subsection 3

4. Legal Requirement: Online Safety Act, Part 5, Section 81, Subsection 2

### Higher Standard

- a. Human moderators must review all content before it can be published on the platform.
- b. Human moderators must be well-supported.
- c. Adult services must deploy tools and changes on all historical content and accounts where reasonably possible, even if this requires removing old content.
- d. Adult services should have a clear and effective deterrence messaging display if a user attempts to search for words and terms associated with underage content and other types of illegal content. This should be supplemented by a message encouraging users to contact an appropriate support organisation.
- e. Adult services should seek to engage with other relevant organisations to use their tools, participate in initiatives, and seek their expertise.
- f. Adult services should invest in horizon scanning for future issues and share intelligence with other platforms about threats to children on their sites or services.



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#### Register your interest

If you are interested in becoming an IWF member and/or would like to find out more information about our standard of good practice, please email [members@iwf.org.uk](mailto:members@iwf.org.uk)