[New guidance for tech companies to protect people online](#)

- Government issues guidance to help tech companies better protect users online
- Advice for businesses will provide a 'one stop shop' on child online safety
- Comes after research shows smaller companies are less confident of measures needed

Safety by design [guidance](#), published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), will help businesses such as start-ups find the information they need so they can build safe products from the development stages right through to the user experience.

Research has shown small companies are less confident in their ability to find information on child online safety compared to medium and large companies.

The guidance advocates putting safety at the heart of platform design to minimise the risk of online harm occurring. It advises companies about providing an age-appropriate experience for children using tools such as age assurance and age verification methods.

This includes encouraging adults to set services' safety measures to high by default so they can't be changed by children, recommending that firms make it easier for users to report harmful content or behaviour, and for companies to block high-risk search terms — for example around illegal terrorist content.

A ['one stop shop'](#) with child safety advice will also help bosses implement crucial safety measures for children users ahead of the government's forthcoming Online Safety Bill. Under the bill tech firms will be required to assess the risks posed to people using their services and provide safer environments for users. The guidance is targeted at companies whose online platforms are used by children, such as social media or gaming platforms.

It includes advice on how to protect children's personal data, address abuse and encourage positive behaviour online, and how to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse. It also recommends applying and actively enforcing minimum age limits and reporting child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Firms will be able to use technologies being developed by the UK's growing safety tech sector which is pioneering new solutions to the challenges of keeping people safe online. It is a UK success story and expanded by 43 per cent last year, created 500 new jobs and saw its revenues reach £314 million.

Digital Minister Caroline Dinenage said:

> We're helping businesses get their safety standards up to scratch

before our new online harms laws are introduced and also making sure they are protecting children and users right now.

We want businesses of all sizes to step up to a gold standard of safety online and this advice will help them to do so.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Read the Safety by Design [guidance](#) and the One Stop Shop [guidance](#).
- The guidance is separate from Ofcom's future regulatory codes of practice. We expect to update the guidance as we know more about what is likely to be in the codes of practice and as we learn more about Safety by Design and its capacity to reduce the risk of online harms.
- We recently published [new figures](#) on the strength and growth of the UK's safety tech sector.
- The draft Online Safety Bill was [published](#) in May.
- The Online Safety Bill will require tech companies to properly protect users – particularly children – or face tough fines or even have their sites blocked.
- Under the new laws, social media, websites, apps and other services which host user-generated content or allow people to talk to others online will need to tackle the spread of illegal content such as hate crime, terrorist material and suicide content.
- They will also need to protect children from harmful content and activity online, such as cyberbullying, and online pornography.