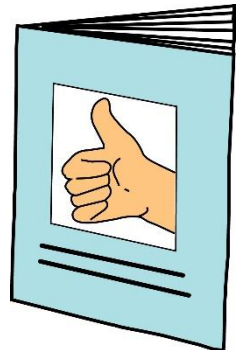


# Code of Practice for online social media platforms

**Code of Practice:** these are rules about how something should be done and the way that people should work.

**Social Media Platforms:** people say social media when they are talking about the places online that you can talk to people, or share pictures, video or ideas.

The Code of Practice has been written by the **Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport**. It has been written in line with **Section 103 of the Digital Economy Act 2017**.<sup>1</sup> This Code is a guide for social media platforms.



**Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport:** this is the person in charge of making sure that the UK is a great place for digital, sports, arts, museums and lots of other things. They also work with the Home Office. The job of the Home Office is to keep the public safe.

**Section 103 of the Digital Economy Act 2017:** this is the part of the law where the Code of Practice is written. This law deals with communication online. It gives information about what should happen when someone breaks the law.

It sets out what the Government thinks that social media platforms should do to stop:

- Bullying
- Insulting, this means saying or writing horrible things about someone.
- Intimidating, this mean threatening a person or group of people.
- Humiliating, this means making fun of people.



This Code of Practice does not affect how illegal information or behaviour is dealt with.

**Online Harm:** this is any behaviour done on the internet or on social media sites which may hurt a person. It could be hurtful information that is posted online or information sent to a person.

The Code is mainly for social media platforms, but it is also useful to any sites where users can comment or add information to the sites.



For example, websites that give reviews, **gaming websites**, online sites for buying and selling things and other sites like this.

**Gaming websites:** these are games played online or websites where players can talk about games.

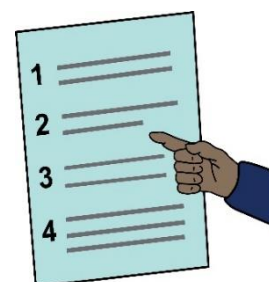
The Government hopes that advert companies and **investors** will also support the goals and information in this Code.



**Investors:** these are people or companies that put money into something.

## A guide for online social media platforms

The Government expects social media platforms to keep to the four **principles** below. Examples of how platforms may wish to keep to the Code are also set out below.



**Principles:** these are values or beliefs.

The examples do not cover everything. Companies should look at how to meet this Code in a way that best meets the need of their service and their users.



This Code may be changed if the Secretary of State thinks that this needs to happen.

# Building online safety for all - key principles

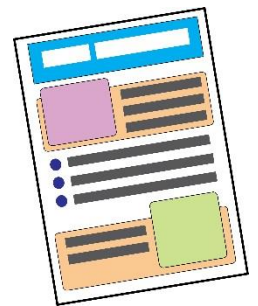


1. Social media platforms should have clear and accessible ways of reporting harmful behaviour.

2. Social media platforms should have a good way of dealing with reports from users, about harmful behaviour.

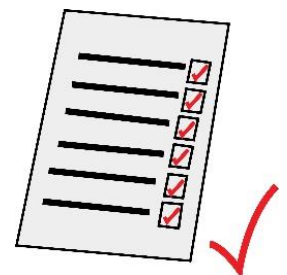


3. Social media organisations should have clear and accessible information about how to report harmful behaviour. This should be in their **terms and conditions**.



**Terms and conditions:** these are the important rules and information that a person must keep to in an agreement or contract. A contract is an agreement by law.

4. Social media organisations should give clear information to the public about action they take against harmful behaviour.



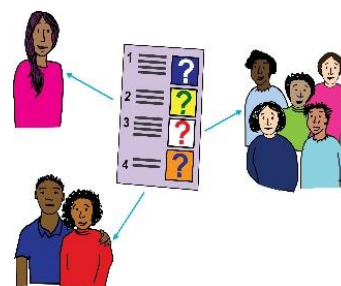
# Good Practice

**Good practice:** here, this means good ways of putting this guide in place in organisations.

The examples below are a guide for organisations on the 4 principles. To write these examples, we have spoken with a number of different organisations, such as:



- Technology companies
- **Trade bodies**
- **Civil society**
- Users at risk of abuse

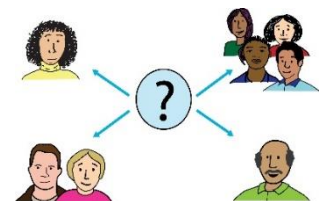
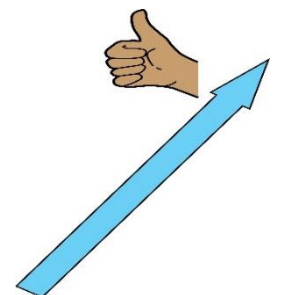


**Trade bodies:** these are organisations that are made up of many companies that work in the same area.

**Civil society:** these are all other people and organisations that are not the Government and business. It could mean people and their families as well as charities and other social organisations.

**Social media platforms should have clear and accessible ways of reporting harmful behaviour. Ways of doing this may be:**

- Ways for non-users to report harmful behaviour for example parents, teachers and social workers. These could be people reporting for children, young people or users at risk of abuse;
- Ways of testing the way people report and ways of making the way people report better. Changes could be made using information given by users. Change could also be made using new products as they come out;
- Consulting people when planning new safety **policies**. Such as professionals, **stakeholders**, including disabled users.



**Policies:** these are rules about how something should be done.

**Stakeholders:** this means any person, group of people or organization, with an interest in the work being done.



**Social media platforms should have a good way of dealing with reports from users, about harmful behaviour. Ways of doing this may be:**



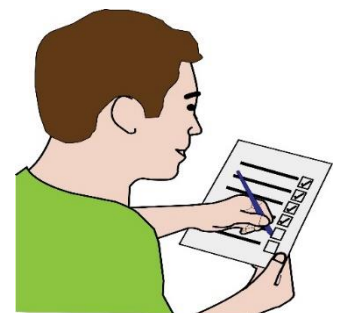
- Telling users within 24 hours that their report has been received. Giving clear information about how reports are dealt with and when they will find out what will be done;



- Thinking about the best way of communicating with users about their reports and making sure the way the organisation replies to people meets their needs;

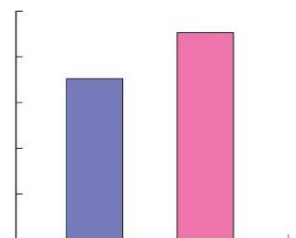
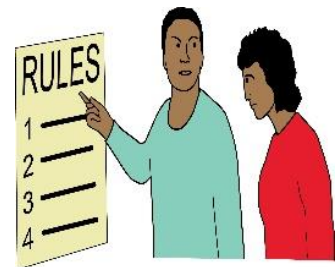
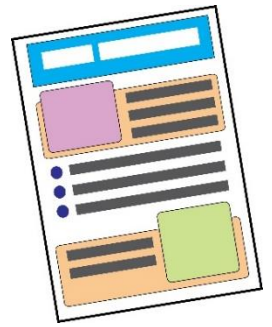


- Reviewing reports in all areas of the terms and conditions and not just in the area that the person is reporting about.



**Social media platforms should have clear and accessible information about how to report harmful behaviour. This should be in their terms and conditions. Ways of doing this may be:**

- Having clear and accessible definitions of what harmful behaviour means and the rules about how to behave;
- Information about what will happen for users if they break the rules in the organisation's terms and conditions;
- Information or a link that explains how guidelines are written, put into practice and reviewed. This should also have information about how well the organisation deals with these issues and how well it has dealt with harmful behaviour. For example, how much harmful information it has taken down.





**Social media platforms should give clear information to the public about action they take against harmful behaviour. Ways of doing this may be:**



- The organisation should get rid of information that is reported and does not meet the organisations rules. Or, they should explain why the information has not been taken down.
- Organisations should give education on how to behave online and what will happen if you do not behave online. This should be for all users but especially for users who have broken the rules.



## **Equality and Accessibility**

The Government is working to push for equality and **diversity** online. It aims to make sure that all groups and people have equal access to the benefits of the internet.



**Diversity:** here, this means there is access to lots of different information online about different areas and communities. It also means that all groups of people can access information online.

There is information that shows that some groups are at more risk of harmful behaviour online, such as:



- Women
- Minority racial and religious groups
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community
- Disabled people



The Government expects Social Media platforms to work in a way that meets the Equality Act 2010.

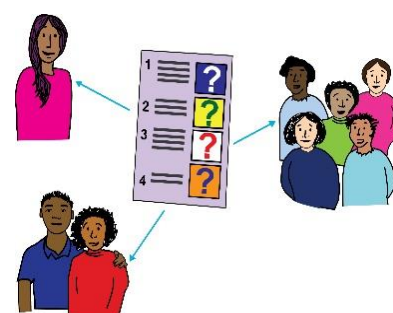


## Consultation

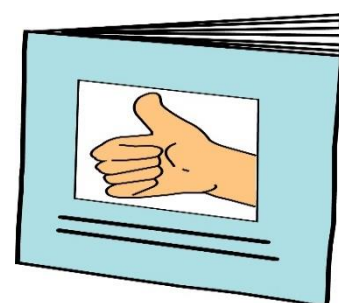
The draft Code of Practice was written in May 2018. This was done because of the Internet Safety **Green Paper**.

**Green paper:** this is the first step in writing a new law. The paper is put together so that ideas for the new law can be talked about.

The Section 103 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 says that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport must consult with the social media organisations that the Code is aimed at. They should also consult anyone else that they think should be consulted.



Our public consultation ran from October to December 2017. It showed that there is a lot of support for a social media Code of Practice.



Our recent consultation ran from May 2018 to December 2018. It asked people and organisations to give their views of the draft Code of Practice. It also asked for examples of good practice. The views of people who were part of this, are now part of the Code of Practice.

