



Dame Melanie Dawes
Chief Executive
Ofcom
Riverside House
London
SE1 9HA

5th September 2025

Dear Melanie,

Meta's AI products and compliance with the Online Safety Act

Last Friday, Meta announced a set of interim changes to address risks to children's safety stemming from the design and operation of its AI chatbots.

This announcement appeared to be an immediate response to the investigation by Reuters journalist Jeff Horwitz and follows the all too familiar pattern of Meta making retrospective safety changes following media reports and bipartisan criticism in Congress.

While Meta has not set out full details of its policy changes, media reports suggest that the platform will no longer train its chatbots to engage with teenage users on self-harm, suicide, disordered eating, or potentially inappropriate sexual and romantic conversations.

Meta spokesperson Stephanie Otway acknowledged that Meta had previously considered its well-publicised AI chatbot guidelines to be appropriate but now recognises that these were a 'mistake.'

While any safety improvements are of course welcome, the Online Safety Act is supposed to break the cycle of platforms making retroactive changes in response to media coverage and personal tragedies. Meta's platforms were required under the Act to complete 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments no later than 24th July. However, it appears policies which the company now acknowledge were an error continued to be in effect several weeks after this date, and were it not for this important reporting, this would presumably still be the case.

By failing to identify and address such reasonably foreseeable safety risks, there appears to be a prima facie case that Meta breached its risk assessment duties as set out in Section 11 of the Act. By any reasonable definition, a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment would be expected to capture risks which the platform itself is now rushing to close.

We therefore formally request that you consider opening an investigation into Meta's compliance with its risk assessment duties under the Act.

Furthermore, this case raises broader and substantive concerns about the approach that Meta is taking to comply with the letter and spirit of UK regulation, with many observers legitimately able to question whether anything has meaningfully changed in Menlo Park, amidst a prevailing culture which continues to view safety-by-design and regulatory compliance as a largely reactive and tick-box undertaking, rather than a first order concern.

Ofcom has so far relied on its supervisory relationship with large firms, and it has been striking to many that of the 40+ investigations it has launched so far, not one has been directed at large (presumably soon to be classified as Category 1) services.

There may of course be good operational and tactical reasons behind this, however civil society, the public and Parliament all reasonably expect to see the regulator acting swiftly to address such seemingly egregious breaches of the Act. On that basis, a formal investigation into Meta's 'business as usual' stance cannot be announced too soon.

I am as always happy to discuss these matters further.

Yours Sincerely

Andy Burrows

Chief Executive