

UK to Launch AI Age Checks on Porn Sites by 2026

July 29, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Download IPFS

In a decisive move to shield children from inappropriate online content, the United Kingdom will soon require adult websites to implement strong age verification systems. Starting in spring 2026, websites that display pornographic material must confirm users are 18 or over using technology such as AI-powered facial age estimation, identity document scans, or credit card checks. The new rules are part of the Online Safety Act and will be enforced by the UK's communications regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom).

The initiative is a long-awaited step to address growing concerns over minors' exposure to explicit content online. Platforms that fail to comply could face severe penalties, including being blocked in the UK or fined up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their global annual revenue, whichever is higher. These regulations will apply to any platform accessible from the UK, even if based overseas.

Ofcom has confirmed that all platforms offering pornographic content will be legally required to verify a user's age before granting access. Acceptable methods may include scanning government-issued IDs, validating credit card details, or using AI-based facial estimation tools. "Pornographic websites will need to ensure that children cannot access them, including through the use of highly effective age verification," Ofcom stated.

The rollout of the rules will happen in two phases. Initially, companies will be allowed time to consult with Ofcom and prepare compliant systems. Full enforcement will begin in 2026. The plan underscores a growing global effort to hold digital platforms accountable for what they host and how they protect younger users.

The law may also address attempts to bypass age checks using tools such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or fraudulent identification. Platforms that are found to be negligent or complicit in allowing underage access could face not just fines but increased regulatory scrutiny.

Though a similar proposal was abandoned in 2019 due to enforcement and privacy concerns, the new framework has been designed with stronger legal backing and broader powers for Ofcom. This time, the UK government appears determined to see it through, pushing for responsible online governance in an era of rapid technological growth.