Position Specification

Ofcom
Group Director, Online Safety

Foreword

Ofcom is the regulator for the communications services that people and businesses across the UK use and rely on each day. We make sure people get the best from their broadband, home phone and mobile services, as well as keeping an eye on TV and radio. We also oversee the universal postal service, look after the airwaves used by wireless devices, and help to make sure people don't get scammed and are protected from bad practices.

In late October last year, we took on the regulation of tech platforms, following the UK's new Online Safety Act. We're looking for an exceptional individual to lead this groundbreaking work as we aim to build a safer life online. We want children and adults to be able to benefit from search and social media services, but to be able to go about their digital lives with greater safety and control than they have today.

We believe that there has never been a more exciting time to join Ofcom. This is a unique chance to shape the way social media services are developed globally, through UK regulation. You will be joining and leading a strong and highly motivated team that is determined to make a difference. If you have the skills and experience we are seeking, and most importantly, a passion to make the online world a safer place, then I look forward to hearing from you.

Dame Melanie Dawes, Chief Executive, Ofcom

Background

In 2023, the highly ambitious Online Safety Act was passed, placing a much wider duty of care on global social media, search and gaming companies to protect their UK users from harm. Ofcom is ten months into the implementation of the new rules. We have already carried out and published major research into children's and adults' experiences online; launched two major consultations on illegal harms and the protection of children; and set up supervision teams to work directly with 30-40 key companies.

This is the biggest expansion of Ofcom's remit since we were first set up in 2003, and we already have more than 400 people across the organisation working on online safety including specialists in online technologies and data. Over the next three to five years our task is to turn the new legislation into reality, finalising detailed codes of practice and using our enforcement powers to drive concrete change across the 150,000 companies in scope of the new rules. There is a strong international element to this role – a big part of the job involves collaboration and partnership with other regulators, both in the UK and overseas.

Ofcom took on regulation of video-sharing platforms including TikTok, Snap, OnlyFans and Twitch in 2021 and we have already driven significant change, notably in getting age checks introduced on adult sites to prevent children from seeing pornography.

The person filling this role – which is on our senior management team, reporting directly to Chief Executive Dame Melanie Dawes – will be in charge of Ofcom's work on online safety, and will lead the Online Safety Group. The group consists of around 210 colleagues and works in collaboration with others across Ofcom, including our legal and enforcement teams, researchers and analysts, and corporate colleagues.

This is a historic opportunity to be part of the first comprehensive regulatory system for online safety in any jurisdiction – improving user safety while protecting freedom of speech. It is a chance to change standards online not just in the UK, but globally.

Ofcom is a great organisation to join – with fantastic people across our whole business. As an independent regulator we account to Parliament, and we are not part of the Civil Service or the Government. Our culture is always to value evidence, and we live by our values: Empowerment; Excellence; Collaboration; Agility and Respect. We prize the creation of a diverse and inclusive workforce, so that we can truly represent and work on behalf of customers across the whole of the UK.

Russell
Reynolds
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The Role

The role-holder will have specific accountability for:

- Leading the delivery of the Online Safety regime and in particular the Online Safety Group, responsible for achieving the regulatory outcomes we seek.
- In the first few years this work – which is detailed in Ofcom's published online safety roadmap (www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/online-safety/information-for-industry/roadmap/ofcoms-approach-to-implementing-the-online-safety-act) includes:
  - setting underlying policy and standards by completing codes and guidance
  - ongoing regulation of certain video-sharing platforms to drive change
  - establishing relationships with, and setting up the regulatory supervision of, a small number of large and/or risky companies within the Online Safety regime
  - developing and delivering our Online Safety enforcement programme to drive further change
  - activating and leading engagement with wider stakeholders both in the UK and internationally, including agencies such as law enforcement and overseas regulators, to embed new working partnerships.

- The Group Director is responsible for leading and delivering the strategy for online safety across Ofcom. They will directly lead the Online Safety Group, which consists of policy professionals, technical experts and other SMEs, based across London and Manchester. We have recruited excellent talent for the Group and a key part of the role is to empower and get the best out of these teams, while also ensuring that key systems and processes are well set up and running smoothly. This role holder must ensure we can continue to attract, retain and develop diverse talent with the broad range of policy, specialist and technical skills we need.
- Ofcom has a strong matrix-based structure and the Online Safety Group works in close partnership with – and get supports from – other key Groups including our Legal and Enforcement function; Economics and Analytics; Strategy and Research; and the Corporate Group.

The role-holder can be based in Ofcom's offices in London or Manchester, with overseas travel expected.

Candidate Profile

As a member of the senior management team (SMT), the Group Director for Online Safety will play a key role in leading and shaping Ofcom's overarching mission and strategy and will contribute to the overall leadership and performance of the organisation. It is a varied and fast-paced role and the post-holder will need to be a highly credible leader who can demonstrate the following **skills, experiences and competencies**:

- A track record as a strategic leader who can build on the work done so far and set a clear vision, direction and purpose at pace in the first phase of this new, live regulatory regime while adapting as we learn.
- A good understanding of the business models, technology and consumer issues in the online sector, and the credibility and ability to inspire the regulated entities to create the changes required.
- An empowering leader, who can take people with them and make the most of the fantastic skill and talent we have already recruited across Ofcom, including in our legal, tech, research, enforcement and economics functions as well as those in the Online Safety Group itself.
- A highly collaborative and inclusive team player, adept at working in a matrix manner to build highly constructive partnerships with fellow executive leaders and drive towards overarching organisational goals.
- A keen practical intelligence, with demonstrated ability to master a broad and complex tech industry-focused policy brief and set direction while balancing a large number of competing priorities.
- Excellent stakeholder management skills, and the ability to navigate priorities and maintain focus in the context of significant media interest and high political and public expectations.
- A first-class communicator, able to represent Ofcom at the most senior levels in global social media and search firms and with other regulators, governments and public bodies globally.
- An ability to demonstrate well-developed judgement and integrity at all times, ensuring that Ofcom always acts proportionately and on the basis of the evidence, and with consistency and transparency.

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Application Process

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Russell Reynolds Associates (RRA) on behalf of Ofcom. Please submit your full application by email to responses@russellreynolds.com. Please quote the role title and assignment code **2407-092L** in the subject heading of the email. All applications will be acknowledged. **The closing date for applications is 23:59 on Monday 7th October 2024.**

Your submission should include:

- A **CV** setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
- A **Statement of Suitability** (no longer than two pages) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the criteria in the candidate profile.
- A completed **Diversity Monitoring Form**. Ofcom is determined to do all we can to promote diversity and inclusion inside our organisation and in the wider sectors we regulate. Our mission is to 'make communications work for everyone'. If we are to succeed, our organisation must reflect the diversity of background, experience, upbringing and thought that exists across the UK. Our diversity and inclusion strategy was published in January 2021. It sets out our five-year strategy for making Ofcom a more diverse and more inclusive organisation. We are driven by the principles and commitments set out in this strategy. We monitor our policies and practices extensively through data analysis and internal reporting, colleague surveys, consulting with colleague networks, external benchmarking and a regular equal pay audit and pay gap reporting.

Please submit all documents so that the panel will have all the required information on which to assess your application against the criteria in the person specification.

Indicative Timeline subject to change

Milestone	Date
Closing date for applications	7th October
Presentation of prospective candidates to agree shortlist	*w/c 7th October*
RRA conducts in-depth interviews with shortlisted candidates	Mid- to late-October
Fireside conversations and candidate assessments	Mid- to late-October
Final panel interviews and further firesides if required	Early- to mid-November

If you wish to speak with someone before submitting an application, please contact responses@russellreynolds.com

Please note that due diligence will be carried out on shortlisted candidates. Candidates should expect this to include searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information.

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