# TikTok axes hundreds of UK content moderation jobs as AI takes centre stage



TikTok is set to cut hundreds of jobs in the United Kingdom, predominantly affecting employees in its Trust and Safety team responsible for moderating content on the platform. This move forms part of a broader global reorganisation aimed at concentrating operations in fewer locations across Europe, alongside a significant shift towards integrating artificial intelligence (AI) more extensively in content moderation. According to a TikTok spokesperson, the company is focusing on "maximising effectiveness and speed" as it evolves this critical function by leveraging technological advancements.

The affected staff, primarily based in London, will face job losses as TikTok migrates much of the work to other European offices. Notably, hundreds more employees in similar roles across parts of Asia are also impacted. The company stated that affected employees will have the opportunity to apply for other internal roles and will be prioritised if they meet the minimum job requirements. TikTok emphasised that its automated content moderation systems, including AI, currently remove about 85% of posts that violate its rules, plays a key role in reducing the exposure of human reviewers to distressing material.

However, the decision has attracted sharp criticism, particularly from the Communication Workers Union (CWU). John Chadfield, the CWU National Officer for Tech, condemned the move as prioritising "corporate greed over the safety of workers and the public." He voiced concerns that TikTok is replacing human moderation teams with what he described as "hastily developed, immature AI alternatives." The announcement coincides with a union vote among TikTok's UK workers seeking recognition, adding a layer of tension to the workforce changes.

These changes come against a backdrop of growing regulatory scrutiny in the UK, which has introduced tougher requirements for online platforms to monitor harmful content and protect younger users. The Online Safety Act came into force in July 2023, imposing stringent duties on companies like TikTok to enforce safety measures and age verification controls, with potential fines reaching up to 10% of a business’s global turnover for non-compliance. TikTok introduced new parental controls alongside these regulatory requirements, including features to restrict specific accounts from interacting with children and enhanced transparency around privacy settings for older teenagers.

Despite these efforts, TikTok has faced ongoing criticism from regulators and organisations worried about its handling of content safety. The UK’s Information Commissioner’s Office launched a "major investigation" into TikTok earlier this year, focusing on whether the platform's recommendation algorithms and moderation systems appropriately safeguard the privacy and safety of younger users. TikTok has maintained that its recommender system operates under "strict and comprehensive measures" to protect teens.

These developments illustrate the complex balancing act TikTok faces: advancing AI-driven moderation technologies to scale efficiently while addressing safety, regulatory expectations, and employee concerns. Industry experts and union representatives warn that an overreliance on AI could undermine the effectiveness of content moderation, especially in handling nuanced, sensitive material that human moderators are better equipped to evaluate. The situation also reflects wider sector trends where social media firms increasingly deploy automated tools amid rising demands to improve user protection, often prompting debate about the best approaches to maintain online safety.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[4]](https://techcrunch.com/2023/07/21/tiktok-lays-off-uk-content-moderators-shifts-to-ai/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-66193772), [[4]](https://techcrunch.com/2023/07/21/tiktok-lays-off-uk-content-moderators-shifts-to-ai/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-66193772), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/26/tiktok-ai-content-moderation-job-cuts-uk-trust-safety-team)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[5]](https://www.nao.org.uk/report/online-safety-act-2023-impact-and-compliance/), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/online-safety-act-comes-into-force-to-protect-children-and-adults-online)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[7]](https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2023/03/ico-launches-investigation-into-tiktok-over-data-protection-concerns/), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/26/tiktok-ai-content-moderation-job-cuts-uk-trust-safety-team)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/26/tiktok-ai-content-moderation-job-cuts-uk-trust-safety-team), [[4]](https://techcrunch.com/2023/07/21/tiktok-lays-off-uk-content-moderators-shifts-to-ai/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.aol.com/tiktok-lay-off-hundreds-uk-125038709.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-66193772> - This BBC article reports on TikTok's decision to cut hundreds of jobs in the United Kingdom, particularly affecting their Trust and Safety team that moderates content on the platform. TikTok is shifting work to other offices in Europe and increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) for content moderation. The article includes response from the Communication Workers Union expressing concern about the reduction in human moderators, emphasising the potential risks to safety. It highlights TikTok's statement about evolving its moderation using technological advancements while noting the impact on staff and wider regulatory scrutiny.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/26/tiktok-ai-content-moderation-job-cuts-uk-trust-safety-team> - The Guardian outlines TikTok's restructuring of its content moderation teams, confirming the layoffs of hundreds of UK workers involved in Trust and Safety. The piece discusses TikTok's intention to integrate AI more deeply in moderating content, aiming to scale operations while reducing human moderator exposure to distressing material. It also references criticism from worker unions and concerns about the safety implications of relying excessively on AI moderation. The article situates these developments within the context of the new Online Safety Act and growing regulatory demands on social media platforms.
4. <https://techcrunch.com/2023/07/21/tiktok-lays-off-uk-content-moderators-shifts-to-ai/> - TechCrunch reports TikTok laying off a significant number of content moderators in the UK as part of a global reorganisation that centralises Trust and Safety functions and increases automation with AI. The article highlights how TikTok claims their automated systems are responsible for removing 85% of content that breaches rules, aiming to reduce the exposure of distressing content to human reviewers. It includes comments from worker unions warning about the potential dangers of replacing humans with AI in sensitive content moderation roles, especially amid regulatory scrutiny across jurisdictions.
5. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/online-safety-act-2023-impact-and-compliance/> - This National Audit Office (NAO) report reviews the impact and compliance requirements of the UK's Online Safety Act 2023. It outlines the obligations placed on social media companies like TikTok to monitor and moderate content diligently and implement strong age verification measures. The report explains that failure to comply with the Act can result in hefty fines, up to 10% of global turnover. It emphasizes the regulatory shift towards protecting users, especially children, from harmful online content and the increased accountability companies face, which is the backdrop for TikTok's operational changes.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/online-safety-act-comes-into-force-to-protect-children-and-adults-online> - The UK government official news release announces the Online Safety Act coming into force in July 2023. The legislation aims to improve protection against illegal and harmful content on social media and other digital platforms, with a particular focus on safeguarding children from inappropriate material. The Act introduces fines of up to 10% of a company’s global revenue for non-compliance. It establishes stronger duties of care on companies, requiring improved content moderation systems including transparency, safety measures, and age-appropriate controls, highlighting the context that influences TikTok's recent policy and organisational decisions.
7. <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2023/03/ico-launches-investigation-into-tiktok-over-data-protection-concerns/> - The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website details the major investigation launched in March 2023 concerning TikTok's data processing practices in the UK. The ICO investigates whether TikTok sufficiently protects the privacy and safety of its younger users, focusing on risks posed by the platform's recommendation and content moderation systems. The article explains how TikTok responded by asserting its recommender operates under strict privacy and safety measures for teens. This investigation forms part of the wider scrutiny of TikTok's handling of content safety and user protection that is linked to recent company changes.