



House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

4 September 2018

Dear Colleague,

On Monday I made a speech at the headquarters of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) on the scale of online child sexual exploitation and my personal commitment to keeping our children safe.

### **Scale of the threat**

The National Crime Agency estimates that around 80,000 people in the UK present some kind of sexual threat to children online. Referrals to the NCA relating to online child sexual exploitation have increased 700% since 2013. Alongside scale, the evolving nature of the threat is also deeply worrying: increasingly graphic content; more frequent documentation of abuse of children under 10; children being groomed in less than 45 minutes; and a rise in live streaming of child sexual abuse. Offenders are using the open and dark web to perpetrate this abuse, and are employing increasingly sophisticated methods to evade detection.

Whilst this Government has invested significantly in our law enforcement and intelligence capabilities to tackle this threat. It is clear, that we must do more, and I have made it a personal mission to work with colleagues and partners right across and outside of Government to make the step change required to respond to the evolving threat.

### **New announcements**

The threat of online child sexual exploitation has evolved at unimaginable speed through the growth of the internet and new opportunities to exploit vulnerable children hidden from behind a screen. That is why I am committed to having open and frank conversations with the web giants. Technology companies – both big and small – have a significant role to play.

I have made a clear call to industry to raise the response to this threat right across the sector, drawing on some of their brightest minds to design out and deny opportunities for offending.

I have demanded that technology companies urgently step up efforts to:

1. block child sexual abuse material before it can be disseminated;
2. stop child grooming taking place on their platforms;
3. work with government and law enforcement to shut down live-streamed child abuse;
4. be much more forward leaning in helping law enforcement agencies to deal with these types of crimes;
5. show a greater level of openness and transparency and a willingness to share best practice and technology between companies.

We will continue to look for opportunities for collaboration and partnership, including making £250,000 available to support new ideas on how to detect and disrupt live streaming of abuse. I will also be co-hosting together with Microsoft a Hackathon in November. The Hackathon will bring together industry experts in the US, to challenge companies to work together to come up with tools to detect online child grooming which will then be offered for free to other companies.

We also know that there are some abuse websites which are generating a profit through advertisements by legitimate companies without their knowledge. I will be establishing a working group with business and the advertising industry to look into what action can be taken to stop this from happening.

Where web giants do not take more measures to remove this type of content from their platforms, we will not hesitate to legislate, taking appropriate action through plans set out in the forthcoming Online Harms White Paper.

Alongside work with industry, we will also ensure law enforcement have the capacity and tools to respond to changing demand. That's why we have announced additional investment of £21.5 million in law enforcement and the UK intelligence community. This will ensure our world class agencies are better equipped to reduce the volume of offending and pursue the most hardened and dangerous offenders.

I also want to put prevention at the heart of this renewed effort, recognising that there are some who can be prevented from offending. An extra £2.6 million will be spent in this area, including funding to child protection charities such as the Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

Building children's resilience and ensuring parents, schools and communities have the information they need to have frank and open conversations with children about their online lives is also critical. That is why we have already announced our intention to make relationships education mandatory in our primary schools, which will include teaching children about staying safe online.

### **International focus**

Less than 1% of child sexual abuse content is now hosted on UK platforms, but this is clearly not a threat that is confined by national boundaries. We know that British children are the victims of online grooming perpetrated by offenders overseas, and that likewise live streamed abuse of children in countries such as the Philippines is being watched by offenders here in the UK. The UK will continue to be a world leader in tackling online child sexual exploitation globally

On Monday I announced a new international network of government advisers who will be stationed around the world and will help coordinate and drive action to tackle child sexual abuse in different regions. Just last week, the Prime Minister also announced that the UK will build a new cyber center in Nairobi to help Kenyan police stop child abuse images being shared online. We will also continue to work with our most trusted partners, including leading a concerted effort on this issue at the next Five Country Ministerial that I will be chair in London in 2019.

We are all sadly familiar with the devastating, long term impact of child sexual abuse. That is why Government, Parliament, industry, law enforcement, charities and communities must unite to defeat this threat. The cost is too great should we fail. I am grateful to colleagues for the support we have had to date, and I look forward to collaborating with many more of you, as we work tirelessly to tackle this scourge and ensure that every child has their innocence and future respected and protected.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

**Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP**