



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

18.09.2023

FAO: Tim Cook at Apple, Jason Citron at Discord, Michael Heyward at Kik (MediaLab), Mark Zuckerberg at Meta, Leif K-Brooks at Omegle, Meredith Whittaker at Signal, Evan Spiegel at Snap, Shou Zi Chew at TikTok and Linda Yaccarino at X (Formerly Twitter)

Subject: Respecting the rights of survivors and the safety of users

Dear technology company CEOs,

I write to you as a survivor. A survivor of online child sexual abuse. A survivor of a culture of building digital products that deprioritised my rights and my safety. I write to you as one of millions of survivors.

It is because of my experiences, the harm online child sexual abuse has caused me and countless others that I am sending this letter, signed by 43 other survivors and those with experience of CSA, and 61 NGOs, academics and child protection experts, to call on you all today to listen to our voices. I want you to know that when you make design choices without engaging with survivors and considering the risks – you can cause significant harm. Today, the pursuit of end-to-end encryption without safeguards will mean offenders can contact, groom and abuse children behind closed doors. In the future, it will be a new technology that puts children at risk. We must not continue down this path.

When I was 13, a social media platform empowered a 30-year-old stranger to seek out myself and other girls and enabled him to contact us directly. A range of social media platforms were available for this stranger to move his conversations to. I was moved to an encrypted messaging app that facilitated this stranger to coerce me into sending hundreds of explicit images and videos of me over a 5-year period. The design of this app ensured the conversation stayed between us, and was never detected or stopped.

In the years since my experience of abuse took place, I have seen governments across the world work with your organisations towards regulation. Many are concerned about how to uphold safety alongside fundamental rights of privacy and freedom of expression. I'm concerned too. As a 13-year-old, I deserved to be safe, and I deserved the right to express myself on the internet. As someone in my early twenties I deserve the right to privacy, the right to know that explicit images and videos of me as a child can't continue to be shared. For myself and millions of other young people at risk of sexual violence online, the right to express ourselves online does not come with the right to be safe and the right to have privacy.

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

In the years since my experience of abuse took place, I have watched your digital products continue to evolve at pace, and seen new products emerge. Many of you have put products live, and then retrospectively taken steps to address harm that has emerged as a result. Many of you are pursuing design choices on how to implement end-to-end encryption at the expense of significant losses in safety for marginalised people. Many of you have put the onus on young people to report harm, and for parents to detect it. A culture of individual responsibility for safety has prevailed. Throughout this time the presence of child sexual abuse material on many of your platforms has grown at an alarming pace. It is time for you to take responsibility for upholding the rights and safety of your users.

In the years since my experience of abuse took place, I have been waiting. Waiting for the moment when those who have control over digital products work with the people harmed by their products. Waiting for the moment when understanding of harm involves the perspectives of the people who have experienced it. Waiting for the moment when platforms work to prioritise safety at the start of making products, not at the end. I'm still waiting. The scale of child sexual abuse on your platforms is still growing. Now is the time to act.

I implore you to work with those affected adversely by the decisions you make, and to champion the rights and safety of the users who you have failed to champion now and in the past. Each day your teams are making countless decisions about how to create and maintain your products. You decide what functionality you want to release, and you make a multitude of decisions about how this is researched, implemented, scaled, rolled out and tested. Each one of these decisions has far reaching impacts on your users – but the most significant of those impacts are felt by those who go on to become survivors.

Currently there is no transparent way for my experiences of sexual violence on your platforms, and the of millions of other young people at risk, to be acknowledged by yourselves and influence the decisions you make. I want no other young person to be in the position I was in years ago, and in the position I'm in today.

You do not have to wait for regulation. To prioritise the rights and safety of your users in your product decisions, you must:

- **Seek out the perspectives of users whose rights and safety are eroded by your products right now.**

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

- **Commit to not pursuing products or services that harm users unless there are stringent safeguards, informed by the perspectives of survivors, in place first. This includes the rollout of end-to-end encryption.**
- **Give these users the transparency and accountability to ensure your platforms are safe. Produce and publish impact assessments which identify who will be adversely impacted by product decisions and what mitigations are in place to uphold their rights and safety.**

Regards,

Frida*

This letter is supported by the following survivors, families, and campaigners with lived experience:

- The Pheonix 11
- Ivy*, 18, who was groomed and blackmailed when she was 15 on a site meant for teenagers.
- Roxy Longworth, 21 - Online Safety Campaigner who was blackmailed into sharing photographs at 13.
- Mared, 27, who was 14 when she was groomed online on Facebook by much older men.
- Eleanor*, 21, who was 14 when she experienced peer-on-peer image-based abuse by having photos shared without her consent online.
- Sarah*, 36, whose 8 year-old-daughter was groomed online using a child's game.
- Elaine*, 32, an Online Safety Campaigner who was 13 when she was groomed online before being sexually abused face-to-face.
- Lucy*, 30, who was sent photographs by an older man when she was 15.
- Jasmine*, 22, who had photographs shared online without her consent as a teenager.
- Louise*, 23, who was 11 when she was groomed and sexually exploited online.
- Ron, whose daughter and granddaughter's lives were seriously affected by online harms.
- Annie*, 36, who was 14 when she was groomed online by her father who pretended to be a boy her own age.
- Aoife, 19, who was 15 when she was groomed and blackmailed on a site meant for children.

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

- Danielle, 27, who was 14 when she was groomed online and sexually abused face to face.
- Ruth Moss
- Rhiannon-Faye McDonald
- Paul Finney
- F, Survivor of technology assisted child sexual abuse
- Emma, Survivor of technology-assisted child sexual abuse
- Elizabeth, Survivor of child sexual abuse
- Nicole Caroli
- Annie
- Mark Neil
- Briella
- Chaya
- Monique
- Charito*
- Alyssa Javier
- Jenielyn Caubang
- Cathy
- Matthew McCarish
- Patrick Sandford
- Lucy Hughes

* An asterix signifies that the signatory is using a pseudonym

This letter is supported by the following organisations and academics/child protection experts:

International NGOs and Coalitions

- AALO 116-111 – Albanian National Child Helpline
- Alliance to Counter Crime Online
- Association for Nonviolent Communication
- Augusta Associates LLC
- Barnardo's
- Brave Movement
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection
- Catch22
- CEASE
- Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse
- Cesta z krize, z. ú.
- Child Focus
- ChildFund International
- Child Helpline International

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

- Child Rights Centre in Albania
- Childlight
- Children England
- Children's Charities' Coalition for Internet Safety
- Collective Shout
- Defence for Children - ECPAT Netherlands
- digiQ
- ECPAT Austria
- ECPAT International
- ECPAT Norge / Norway
- ECPAT Shqipëri / ECPAT Albania
- ECPAT Taiwan
- Eurochild
- Fondazione S.O.S Il Telefono Azzurro
- Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation
- Innocence in Danger e.V.
- InterIJM Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Instituto de Apoio à Criança
- ISPCC
- Lasten perusoikeudet - Children's Fundamental Rights ry
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation
- Marie Collins Foundation
- MiudosSegurosNa.Net
- National Network for Children - Bulgaria
- Network for Children's Rights
- NGO "Internet Safety Center "Stop Sexting"
- NGO Theatre Tsvete
- NSPCC
- NWG Nework
- Platform HOPE
- Safe Online / End Violence Global Partnership
- Society Kljuc - centre for fight against trafficking in human beings
- Spletno oko
- Stichting Praat
- Stop sexting, Ukraine
- Suojellaan Lapsia ry / Protect Children
- Terre des Hommes Netherlands
- The Grace Tame Foundation
- The Smile of the Child
- Združenje za MOČ

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500 | nspcc.org.uk

Academics/Experts in Child Protection

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Dr Elly Hanson | Clinical Psychologist & Expert | Tech-assisted abuse and child welfare online |
| Dr Juliane Kloess | Lecturer in Forensic Clinical Psychology | The University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK |
| Dr Michael Salter | President, International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation | UNSW, Sydney, Australia |
| Professor Lelia Green | Professor of Communications | Edith Cowan University, Perth WA |
| Professor Nuria Lorenzo-Dus | Director, Project DRAGON-S – Developing Resistance Against Grooming Online-Spotter & Shield | Swansea University, Wales UK |
| Scarlett Franks | Survivor Advocate and Researcher | The University of Sydney, Australia |
| Professor Sonia Livingstone | Professor of Social Psychology | London School of Economics, London, UK |

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR