



Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
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House of Commons
London
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16th July 2022

Dear Candidate

Online Safety Bill

As Prime Minister there is arguably no more important responsibility than protecting our children from abuse.

In recent years we have seen a disturbing increase in the scale and complexity of online sexual abuse. Over just the last four years, online grooming offences have increased by 84 per cent. As we emerge from the pandemic, it is clear the threat to children has increased, with ever growing demand for child abuse images, and abusers finding new ways to exploit online services that have not been built with children's safety front of mind.

Self-regulation by the tech industry has demonstrably failed. Unless there is urgent legislative action, an ever-growing number of children and families will face the unimaginable trauma of child sexual abuse, grooming, and the life changing consequences of inherently preventable harm.

The next Prime Minister will have an opportunity to break this cycle of harm, and to protect children and families from appalling abuse. The disturbing reality is that every single day sees more children groomed on their smartphones and tablets, contacted by abusers on their way home from school, and coerced into the most appalling acts of online sexual abuse.

But this doesn't have to be the case. The NSPCC strongly welcomed the crucial commitment to delivering new legislation to tackle online harms in the Conservative Party's 2019 manifesto and, over the last three years, we have worked closely with ministers to build legislation that can turn the tide on online sexual abuse and reinforce the UK's global leadership on this issue.

We have always been clear that the Online Safety Bill is above all else a child protection measure. The swift passage of this important Bill can protect children and families from unimaginable and wholly unacceptable abuse.

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Any delay or watering down of the Bill will come at considerable cost to children and families, and it would represent the reversal of an important manifesto commitment that commands strong levels of public support. YouGov research for the NSPCC underlined that almost 90 per cent of U.K. adults think it is essential the Online Safety Bill is brought into law and delivers strong and comprehensive measures to protect children from online child sexual abuse.

We therefore urge all candidates, should they be successful, to deliver the Bill in full, at the earliest opportunity, to secure the much-heralded ambition of the Conservative Party that the U.K. becomes the safest place in the world to be online. Children and families deserve no less.

We would be delighted to offer you a detailed briefing of the importance of this legislation, and to extend the opportunity to meet with those who have experienced this most devastating of assaults on their childhood.

Yours Sincerely

Sir Peter Wanless
Chief Executive

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