[Press release: Government outlines next steps to make the UK the safest place to be online](#)

- New review launched into online laws
- Code of practice will set new standards for online platforms
- [New guide for teachers](#) to develop children's online safety skills

The Prime Minister has announced plans to review laws and make sure that what is illegal offline is illegal online as the Government marks Safer Internet Day.

The Law Commission will launch a review of current legislation on offensive online communications to ensure that laws are up to date with technology.

As set out in the [Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#), the Government is clear that abusive and threatening behaviour online is totally unacceptable. This work will determine whether laws are effective enough in ensuring parity between the treatment of offensive behaviour that happens offline and online.

The Prime Minister has also announced:

- That the Government will introduce a comprehensive new social media code of practice this year, setting out clearly the minimum expectations on social media companies
- The introduction of an annual internet safety transparency report — providing UK data on offensive online content and what action is being taken to remove it.

Other announcements made today by Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Matt Hancock include:

- A new [online safety guide](#) for those working with children, including school leaders and teachers, to prepare young people for digital life
- A commitment from major online platforms including Google, Facebook and Twitter to put in place specific support during election campaigns to ensure abusive content can be dealt with quickly — and that they will provide advice and guidance to Parliamentary candidates on how to remain safe and secure online

DCMS Secretary of State Matt Hancock said:

> We want to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online and having listened to the views of parents, communities and industry, we are delivering on the ambitions set out in our Internet Safety Strategy.

Not only are we seeing if the law needs updating to better tackle online harms, we are moving forward with our plans for online platforms to have tailored protections in place — giving the UK public standards of internet safety unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

Law Commissioner Professor David Ormerod QC said:

There are laws in place to stop abuse but we've moved on from the age of green ink and poison pens. The digital world throws up new questions and we need to make sure that the law is robust and flexible enough to answer them.

If we are to be safe both on and off line, the criminal law must offer appropriate protection in both spaces. By studying the law and identifying any problems we can give government the full picture as it works to make the UK the safest place to be online.

The latest announcements follow the publication of the [Government's Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#) last year which outlined plans for a social media code of practice. The aim is to prevent abusive behaviour online, introduce more effective reporting mechanisms to tackle bullying or harmful content, and give better guidance for users to identify and report illegal content. The Government will be outlining further steps on the strategy, including more detail on the code of practice and transparency reports, in the spring.

To support this work, people working with children including teachers and school leaders will be given a new guide for online safety, to help educate young people in safe internet use. Developed by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety ([UKCCIS](#), the toolkit describes the knowledge and skills for staying safe online that children and young people should have at different stages of their lives.

Major online platforms including Google, Facebook and Twitter have also agreed to take forward a recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) to provide specific support for Parliamentary candidates so that they can remain safe and secure while on these sites. during election campaigns. These are important steps in safeguarding the free and open elections which are a key part of our democracy.

ENDS

Note to editors:

Included in the Law Commission's scope for their review will be the Malicious Communications Act and the Communications Act. It will consider whether difficult concepts need to be reconsidered in the light of technological

change – for example, whether the definition of who a 'sender' is needs to be updated.

The Government will bring forward an Annual Internet Safety Transparency report, as proposed in our Internet Safety Strategy green paper. The reporting will show:

- the amount of harmful content reported to companies
- the volume and proportion of this material that is taken down
- how social media companies are handling and responding to complaints
- how each online platform moderates harmful and abusive behaviour and the policies they have in place to tackle it.

Annual reporting will help to set baselines against which to benchmark companies' progress, and encourage the sharing of best practice between companies.

The new social media code of practice will outline standards and norms expected from online platforms. It will cover:

- The development, enforcement and review of robust community guidelines for the content uploaded by users and their conduct online
- The prevention of abusive behaviour online and the misuse of social media platforms – including action to identify and stop users who are persistently abusing services
- The reporting mechanisms that companies have in place for inappropriate, bullying and harmful content, and ensuring they have clear policies and performance metrics for taking this content down
- The guidance social media companies offer to help users identify illegal content and contact online, and advise them on how to report it to the authorities, to ensure this is as clear as possible
- The policies and practices companies apply around privacy issues.

Education for a Connected World: A framework to equip children and young people for digital life is available on the [UKCCIS page of GOV.UK](#).

- Guidance is given on eight different aspects of online education: self-image and identity, online relationships, online reputation, online bullying, managing online information, health, wellbeing and lifestyle, privacy and security, and copyright and ownership.
- The Framework has been developed by members of the UKCCIS Education Working Group.
- UKCCIS is a group of more than 200 organisations drawn from across government, industry, law, academia and charity sectors working in partnership to help keep children safe online.
- The UKCCIS Education Working Group brings together ten leading organisations in online safety in education:, Barnardo's, CEOP (the child protection command of the National Crime Agency), Childnet, Department for Education, Kent County Council, the NSPCC, Parent Zone, the PSHE Association, South West Grid for Learning and the UK Safer Internet Centre. It focuses on how education settings in the UK are responding to the challenges of keeping their pupils safe online.

Supportive statements:

Jonathan Baggaley, CEO of the PSHE Association said:

> We're delighted to have supported the development of the UKCCIS framework. Education plays a critical role in preparing young people for the opportunities and challenges of this rapidly changing digital world. The UKCCIS framework provides an invaluable tool for teachers, supporting them to plan a developmental curriculum which will help children to thrive online.'

Ken Corish, Online Safety Director at South West Grid for Learning said:

> Children and young people use technology in empowering and sophisticated ways in online environments that have become increasingly complex. Our approach to educating in this area requires a sophistication to match; it should resonate; be relevant and prompt the outcomes that affect cultural change.
>
> This UKCCIS framework has been designed to identify those opportunities for anyone shaping their teaching in this area from very young children right through to young adults. It brings the current online technology landscape into one document and maps those opportunities against age/developmental stage.
>
> We think it is both challenging and relevant and hope it assists in creating online technology education that makes a difference.

Barnardo's Chief Executive, Javed Khan said:

> Barnardo's welcomes this framework for educators to help children and young people of all ages stay safe and have a positive experience online.
>
> The fast-moving digital world puts increasing pressures on children which can affect their self-image and make them vulnerable to potential bullying and grooming online.
>
> This UKCISS framework should be used by the tech industry to incorporate age appropriate safeguards into their apps and platforms to help prevent abuse happening.