[Priti Patel launches new fund to help tackle child sexual abuse online](#)

Home Secretary Priti Patel will today (8 September) tell social media companies that they must take our children's safety as seriously as they do their bottom line at a meeting of the G7 interior ministers.

She will also call on G7 partners to back the UK approach in holding the internet technology giants to account if harmful content continues to be posted across their platforms and if they neglect public safety when designing their products.

Her call to action comes as she launches a new fund aimed at tackling child sexual abuse online.

Innovators and tech experts will be given government funding to show the internet technology giants how they can better design their products and not increase the risk of their platform's being a safe haven for child sexual abusers.

The UK's new Safety Tech Challenge Fund will award five organisations from across the world up to £85,000 each to develop innovative technologies to keep children safe when using end-to-end encrypted messaging services.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

> The UK is a world leader in tackling child sexual abuse online, and it is vital that the G7 and technology companies alike step up to protect children and victims from sick perpetrators and crack down on this abhorrent crime.
>
> The technology giants have a responsibility to protect their users online, and must take our children's safety and security as seriously as they do their bottom line when designing new products.
>
> This new fund will bring together global experts to show the technology companies how they can responsibly implement end-to-end encryption without putting our children's safety at greater risk.

Minister for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage said:

> We are bringing in world-leading laws to make the internet safer for everyone in the UK, especially children. But we also want to see tech firms innovating to make their platforms safer too.
>
> Through this fund, we are supporting them to create practical solutions to the challenges around end-to-end encryption which

balance privacy with the pressing need to end safe spaces for child abuse online.

Companies awarded Tech Challenge funding will develop innovative solutions to show the silicon valley giants how they could continue to detect images or videos showing sexual abuse of children while ensuring end-to-end encryption is not compromised.

The fund, which will run for five months from November 2021, is part of the government's wider effort to tackle harmful behaviours taking place on social media and other online platforms.

The announcement comes as the Home Secretary meets with her G7 counterparts over the next two days, with tackling child sexual exploitation, and internet safety and security, dominating the agenda on day one.

Interior ministers will look at how the G7 can work together to keep their citizens safe online and the bring the sick perpetrators of child sexual abuse and exploitation to justice.

John Clark, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) President & CEO:

> The NCMEC applauds the launch of the UK's Safety Tech Challenge Fund. Last year we received more than 21 million reports relating to child sexual exploitation, and the numbers of reports this year are likely to be even higher.
>
> The Safety Tech Challenge will be crucial to enabling the tech industry, academic experts, non-profits, and government agencies to collaborate together on global solutions to keep children safer online without compromising consumer privacy.
>
> Time is of the essence to develop safety measures that can operate in encrypted environments to protect children, whose images are being circulated online.

Julie Inman Grant, Australian e-safety Commissioner:

> As a global community we must strive to take every step we can to combat the scourge of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, wherever it is found.
>
> Encryption is a many-layered, complex issue that requires detailed consideration and thoughtful review in order to minimise the potential for harm and ensure that a suitable balance is struck between security, privacy and safety.
>
> There are promising technological breakthroughs that can surface

illegal content in E2EE environments without sacrificing user privacy, and we must harness the possibilities that they offer in a unified and integrated way.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the UK's safety tech challenge investment fund and working in collaboration with our partners to ensure that effective solutions are able to be implemented and adopted globally.

Technologies developed will be evaluated by independent academic experts to measure effectiveness and privacy safeguards.

Applications for funding will open to applicants globally from 8 September 2021, and close on 6 October 2021.

For more information on the fund, please visit: www.safetytechnetwork.org.uk/innovation-challenges