

**Oral Question: Report from the Children’s Commissioner:
Talking to your child about online sexual harassment: A
guide for parents that finds children are “stumbling
across” commercial pornography.**



Monday 24 January 2022

Potential follow up questions:

1. Recent findings by the IWF state that the **7 to 10** age group is the fastest growing age group appearing in self-generated child sexual abuse material. What steps is the Government taking to give age-appropriate online safety advice to this age group?
2. The Internet Watch Foundation’s recent Gurls out Loud and Home Truths campaign has highlighted just how important one conversation with children about their online safety can be. What steps is the Government taking to encourage and equip parents to talk to their children about the dangers that lurk online?
3. The APPG on Social Media recently conducted an inquiry into what’s behind the rise of self-generated indecent images of children online. It concluded that there needed to be more focus put on encouraging constructive conversations about online safety, that were less focused on blaming children. Can the Government outline how they are proposing to achieve this through the recently published [Keeping Children Safe in Education consultation](#)?
4. The Online Safety Bill will shortly be coming before Parliament. What steps is the Government taking in that Bill to tackle the role pornography has played in the shocking normalisation of unhealthy sexual behaviour in society and will it include implementing age verification for adult websites, so children don’t have access to developmentally inappropriate content?

Background:

- Since March 2020, young girls have been sharing their experiences of sexual harassment through the “everyone’s invited project.” This is an online platform where girls- most of whom are still in school- have described growing up in a world where sexual harassment has been “normalised.”
- A recent [Ofsted report](#) into sexual harassment in schools found that **9 in 10 girls** had been subject to sexual abuse or harassment through either sexist name calling or being sent unwanted explicit videos which happened a lot or sometimes.
- A recent [report](#) from the APPG for Social Media found that as many as **1 in 7** children aged **11-17** had been asked to send self-generated images and sexual messages.
- On average **one child** per primary school class has been sent or shown a naked or semi-naked image by an adult.

IWF's Statistics in 2021:

- The IWF received and processed **361,000** reports of suspected child sexual abuse material. More reports than the **entire first 15 years** that we have been operating.
- The IWF confirmed **252,000** URLs (webpages) as containing child sexual abuse material, each webpage can contain anything from 1 to thousands of individual images, meaning we have **removed millions and millions of images in the past year**.
- **182,000** of these reports contained “self-generated” indecent images of children.
- And children in the **7-10 age range** were the fastest growing age group that we were seeing in this illegal imagery, with a **235%** increase in this age group from 2020.

Campaign to prevent “self-generated” images:

Over the last two years, the IWF has identified a dramatic increase in “self-generated” indecent imagery. This includes instances where a young person, usually a girl, is alone in her room using a camera-enabled device and is groomed into sexual activity which is then captured and shared by the offender.

We developed a nation-wide campaign with two strands. First, [Home Truths](#) targeted parents and urged them to T.A.L.K. to their child:

- **Talk to your child** about online sexual abuse.
- **Agree digital boundaries.**
- **Learn about online platforms** your child loves.
- **Know how to use tools and safety settings.**

We also ran another strand called [Gurls Out Loud](#) which aimed to build young girls' resilience to help them spot the signs of grooming or coercion. The main message was to block, report, and tell someone you trust.

Key Conclusions from the campaign evaluation found:

- Around **1 in 4** girls have been affected by the issue, either knowing someone who has received a request for a nude or themselves receiving a message that made them feel uncomfortable.
- **One good quality conversation** about online grooming can make all the difference to both parents/carers and daughters – daughters who had been spoken to were more open to the possibility of their parents talking to them again.
- Girls who saw the campaign were more likely (than those who had not) to react positively to the thought of a conversation with their parents about self-generated online child sexual abuse.
- Parents are more likely to speak to their daughters about grooming and online sexual abuse if they have knowledge of the issue.