



Home Office

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Minister of State for Security

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www.gov.uk/home-office

7 May 2020

Dear Industry Partner,

Countering online child sexual exploitation and abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic

As many of you may be aware, the Five Country Governments - comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America - jointly launched a set of *Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* on 5 March 2020. I am pleased to see that many companies and non-government organisations have already publicly endorsed these principles, signifying an important first step towards cross-sector action to address the scale and complexity of this evolving problem. While I look forward to ensuring long-term progress against each of these principles, I am writing to you now because the COVID-19 global pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges that we must collectively meet head on.

The measures put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 have led to both children and offenders spending significantly more time at home and online. Technology companies are often the first to become aware of online child abuse on their platforms and will be vital to combatting this problem as it manifests. The data and trends logged by companies in this time are central to Governments forming a proactive and targeted response.

Opportunistic online offending during COVID-19 is a matter of critical concern to the UK Government and our US, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian counterparts. Our respective law enforcement agencies are working tirelessly to keep our citizens safe from those who wish to do them harm. Governments will continue to communicate risks to parents and children and provide access to support services and trusted resources, ensuring that all sectors are equipping themselves to prevent and disrupt offenders. We will make sure that the most vulnerable people in our community are educated about how online platforms and services are used to facilitate abuse.

I acknowledge some companies' early efforts to respond to the increased risk. In collaboration with the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, these companies have developed a series of

targeted public service announcements to help parents, caregivers and children themselves watch out for risks online, and to stay safe at home – and stay safe online – during these challenging times. The NGO End Violence Against Children has teamed up with these technology companies to support this campaign to help keep children safe in this rapidly changing environment. Further information and materials are available here: www.end-violence.org/safeonlinecovid. Companies not already involved in the campaign that wish to lend their support can contact: Secretariat@end-violence.org

The Voluntary Principles set out the full scope of the online child sexual exploitation and abuse threat. Now more than ever, Governments and digital industry need to engage in an open dialogue focussed on urgent concerns, particularly the COVID-19-specific increase in grooming and livestreaming. Frank and collaborative exchange of information is the standard we must meet, and I call upon you all to engage with officials in the UK Home Office and their Five Country counterparts, as well as law enforcement and NGOs, to share key trends and insights your companies are seeing at this time, as well as the safeguards and protective measure you are putting in place.

I have addressed this letter to those companies and organisations that were involved in the drafting of the Voluntary Principles or have since indicated their support for that initiative, as well as additional relevant digital industry members.

Further information on the Voluntary Principles is available here: info@weprotect.com <https://www.weprotect.org/products>

I am copying Ministers from the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and the Chair of the WeProtect Global Alliance to this letter.

Yours sincerely,


**RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE
MINISTER OF STATE FOR SECURITY**