



Women and Equalities Committee

4 June 2025

Alex Davies-Jones MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
Ministry of Justice

Government's response to WEC's NCII report

Dear Alex,

The Women and Equalities Committee has had time to consider the recent Government response to our report into non-consensual intimate image (NCII) abuse, including the specific responses from the MoJ. In a number of areas we find the Government's response leaves genuine need unmet.

An accessible route for victims to get their content taken down or blocked

Our inquiry found that the current legislative framework does not adequately support victims who want to get their NCII taken down. While the criminal law may, as the Government rightly points out, act as a deterrent to NCII being posted in the first instance, it is wholly unsuitable for victims who need support to get published images removed swiftly. The Online Safety Act (OSA) confers Ofcom with enforcement powers, but these are slow, bureaucratic, and not designed to provide individuals with redress, something that Ofcom has repeatedly confirmed to us.

What is concerning is the lack of an accessible route for individual victims to pursue to get their images removed from non-compliant sites or access to those images blocked. It is for this reason that we recommended the establishment of a dedicated statutory civil regime supported by a registry of NCII content. Such a regime is necessary because, unlike child sexual abuse imagery, NCII cannot be objectively assessed as such from the image alone; a second step is required to determine consent and then designate the image as illegal.

There are a multitude of levers that the Internet Watch Foundation uses to tackle CSAM, all of these would be available to victims of NCII as soon as a process to confirm content as NCII is established. The Government rejects our recommendation but, in doing so, fails to provide any alternative method by which individuals can get their material taken down or blocked. That there is less evidence than would be ideal for the effectiveness of the civil regime in British Columbia, which our report referenced, is not a reason for inaction in tackling this problem. In fact, such inaction represents a



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systemic failure to protect women and girls from a form of abuse that is deeply harmful, widespread, and technologically evolving.

Without a dedicated statutory civil regime for NCII, victims are left to navigate a patchwork of legal options, none of which are tailored to the specific harms of NCII. In its response to our report, the Government referred to sexual harm and domestic violence orders, both of which the police would have to apply for, as they are part of the criminal justice system. Many victims of NCII want a civil process, as it avoids having to go to the police and could provide swifter resolution (police investigations can be lengthy), as well as being easier to access.

The Government's response also referred to the example of Georgia Harrison as someone who was able to secure compensation through existing civil mechanisms. However, hers was a high-profile case, and thus many lawyers with the requisite specialist expertise would have been eager to represent her. Furthermore, despite Harrison being awarded £200,000, she has yet to receive the money, and even if she had, she would have had to spend much of it on legal expenses. If anything, the example given of Georgia Harrison shows precisely why the existing system is inappropriate for victims of NCII.

The issue is, therefore, that the civil measures that do exist are inaccessible, confusing, prohibitively expensive and unsuitable. A specialized civil tribunal or online process, as set up most recently in Canadian provinces, could offer a low-cost, accessible, and efficient route to justice.

The Government also mischaracterises the civil law as being unlikely to be a more effective deterrent than the criminal law. However, the primary function of the civil law in this context is to provide practical, survivor-led mechanisms for content removal and redress, including for those who do not wish to engage with the criminal justice system.

We note that the Government recognises "the need to facilitate survivors to take fast and effective action" and states that this will be considered further in the development of the VAWG strategy. With the Crime and Policing Bill currently before the House, there is an opportunity to act now. I urge the Government to reconsider our proposal.

Statutory six-month time limit for taking and sharing offence

The Government has also rejected our recommendation to extend the period within which the offence of taking or sharing NCII can be tried in the Magistrates' Court. It is not uncommon for a victim of NCII to only discover that their image is circulating online many months after it has been posted. We note that the time limit has been extended



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for the offence of creating deepfakes. This creates the situation whereby someone could create and share an image, the victim finds out nine months later and is able to bring a prosecution for creation but not for the arguably more serious offence of sharing which has been timed out. We find this approach to be baffling. By not extending the time limit, the Government is denying justice to a significant cohort of victims.

We note the Government's response states that there is a more serious offence if you prove an intent to cause distress, which can then go to the Crown Court, where the time limit does not apply. However, this fails to consider cases whereby it may be difficult to prove intent, or indeed where the offenders may not have had any intent to cause distress. Disapplying the time limit for the offence of sharing will ensure the law is simple and straightforward for police to prosecute and ensure justice for victims of NCII abuse, regardless of when they may learn that the crime has taken place.

The Committee has tabled an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill, in my name, to disapply the six-month time limit against the offence of sharing intimate photographs or films being tried by a Magistrates' Court. I urge the Government to reconsider its response and support our amendment or bring forward its own.

I am sure you will appreciate that timing on this is tight, so I would be grateful for a response to this letter ahead of report stage of the Crime and Policing Bill.

I am very happy to meet with you and your officials to discuss our concerns in more detail.

Kind regards,

Sarah Owen MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee