

Rt. Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury,
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

2 November 2020

Dear Chancellor,

Securing the future of the UK Safer Internet Centre

We are writing to ask that the Government supports the UK Safer Internet Centre's bid for funding at the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Government aims to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has obliged us to spend more time than ever on the internet. This includes our children and young people, for whom the online world is a wonderfully exciting but also potentially risky place to be. As a country we must do everything we can to keep them safe.

The UK Safer Internet Centre plays a pivotal role in this. It runs Safer Internet Day, the critical annual touchpoint in online safety education, which this year reached half of the nation's children. It undertakes world-leading work to identify and address emerging threats online and collaborates with industry to deliver the innovations required. It also delivers critical reporting services including a hotline to keep UK hosting space free of child sexual abuse images and the Report Harmful Content website which is the only route for complaints regarding removal of legal but harmful content.

The Centre's unique educational resources, co-created by experts working with young people, and the support it provides to children and their carers, are equally important. More than 21,000 teachers and other professionals have received training through the Centre and thousands of young people are now active peer educators in their communities thanks to the Centre's work. In many cases, these measures and initiatives have been vital for securing safety.

For this to continue, £1.3m annual funding from the European Union needs to be replaced. This amounts to 50 per cent of the Centre's funding and without it, efforts to innovate to remove illegal and harmful content online will be hampered, schools will be less supported to educate and protect their pupils on these crucial safety issues, and millions of children will be more vulnerable to the growing number of threats they face online each day.

As 28 members of the education, technology and charity sectors that value the UK Safer Internet Centre and work with it to help young people, we are asking the Government, as it takes back control of UK finances, to commit to supporting the service the UK Safer Internet Centre provides. The cost would be just 10 pence per year for every child under the age of 15.

We are looking forward to Safer Internet Day on 9th February 2021 and believe it is essential the Government ensures momentum for the Safer Internet Centre's critical work by accepting its bid for long term support. This is vital work to keep children and young people safe online.

Minister Matt Warman MP confirmed the Government supports the Centre's work in response to Safer Internet Day this year (Hansard, 13 February). We urge you to provide the resources it needs.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Ainsworth, Chair of the Cross-Government Hate Crime Independent Advisory Group

David Austin, CEO, BBFC

Chief Constable, Simon Bailey QPM

Sangeet Bhullar, Wise Kids

Professor Emma Bond, University of Suffolk

Carolyn Bunting, CEO, Internet Matters

John Carr OBE, Chair CHIS

Kevin Courtney, General Secretary, National Education Union

Julian David, CEO, techUK

Professor Julia Davidson, University of East London

Deborah Denis, CEO, Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Paul Fletcher, CEO, BCS the Chartered Institute for IT

Gareth Germer, Chief Operating Officer, the Samaritans

Damian Harvey, Interim Head of C2k at Education Authority Northern Ireland

Russell Haworth, CEO, Nominet

Nancy Kelly, CEO, Stonewall

Lorin Lafave, CEO, Breck Foundation

Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE, London School of Economics (LSE)

Graham Lowe, Online Safeguarding Advisor at Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership and Lancashire Safeguarding Adults Board

Chris Martin, CEO, the Mix

Tessy Ojo CBE, CEO, the Diana Award

Tink Palmer MBE, CEO, the Marie Collins Foundation

Professor Andy Phippen, University of Bournemouth

Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT

Ian Russell, Molly Rose Foundation

Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, Scottish Government

Peter Wanless, CEO, NSPCC

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT