Cyber-bullying

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): Click here to watch Sarah speak

What steps she is taking to prevent harassment through the sending of unsolicited sexual images via the internet and telephone.

The Minister for Crime Prevention (Norman Baker):

The coalition Government takes all forms of harassment, whether online or offline, very seriously. We have robust legislation in place to deal with cyber-stalking and harassment, and perpetrators of grossly offensive, obscene or menacing behaviour face stiff punishment. We will continue to work collaboratively with industry, charities and parenting groups to develop tools and information for users aimed at keeping society safe online.

Dr Wollaston:

I welcome the measures that the Government have taken to prevent sexual violence against women and girls. The Minister will be aware that many young people have been pressured into sending intimate photographs of themselves only to find that those images are sometimes posted, distributed or shared without their consent, which is an important form of bullying and harassment. What measures have been taken, and does the Minister support measures to prevent smartphone use by those who are not mature enough to understand that it can result in an important form of bullying?

Norman Baker:

I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who makes an important point. We have given teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by searching for and, if necessary, deleting inappropriate images or files on electronic devices, including mobile phones. It is critical to educate young people about the risks of sending intimate photographs. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre has developed a specific educational resource to tackle sexting that is designed for use by teachers. There are numerous laws in place that can be used to deal with those who behave in this appalling manner.

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