

ISPA UK Statement:

Control of Internet Access (Child Pornography) – Margaret Moran.

The Internet Services Providers' Association (ISPA) – the UK's leading Internet trade association - has been communicating with Margaret Moran in the lead up to today's Ten Minute Rule Bill. We have outlined the steps UK ISPs take to combat online images of child abuse and the practicalities associated with the problem.

We understand that the Government will not be supporting the onward passage of this Bill, a decision taken in light of the success of the UK Internet industry's self-regulatory action.

The UK is currently leading the world in the development of a safer Internet. ISPA UK was the world's first Internet trade association; ISPA created the world's first code-of-practice for ISPs; the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) was the first organisation of its kind in the world; and the UK produced the world's first guidelines for safer chat services.

ISPA and its members have a zero tolerance of illegal child abuse content. ISPA works closely with non governmental organisations such as the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), the Government and law enforcement agencies to help promote online safety. ISPA has contributed significantly to the Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet, which has worked to make the Internet a safer place for children.

The UK Internet industry continues to run an effective, self-regulatory 'notice and takedown' procedure. This means that when an ISP is made aware of illegal material hosted on their servers by organisations such as the Internet Watch Foundation or law enforcement agencies, they remove it.

This self-regulatory procedure has produced exceptional results in removing illegal images from the UK Internet. According to the IWF, less than one per cent of potentially illegal content is hosted in the UK.

Technical solutions to preventing access to web sites offering illegal images

While many ISPs have implemented web blocking technology, each ISP has a different infrastructure. This means that there is no 'one size fits all' technical solution to preventing access to web sites offering illegal images in territories outside of the UK.

Any solution currently installed in ISPs will only prevent "casual" browsing of web sites known to regularly contain images of child abuse. It will not hinder organised distribution of such images. It will not prevent access to new web sites offering illegal content, nor will it prevent children being abused.

ISPA is concerned that forcing Internet companies to state publicly whether or not they use technology to block sites containing images of child abuse may inadvertently aid those trying to access illegal sites. In addition ISPs do not publicise these activities in order to prevent paedophiles from trying to find ways around these filters.

The role of Internet Users in tackling illegal online content

In a survey commissioned by ISPA in May 2004, more than one in eight respondents (13 per cent) would do nothing if they found something on the Internet that they thought was illegal.

Only 26 per cent of people said they would surf the Internet to find the most appropriate organisation to report potentially unlawful content. Instances of images depicting child abuse, UK hosted material that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act and UK hosted criminally racist material should be referred to the IWF via www.iwf.org.uk.

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A backgrounder on ISP's liability for third-party content is available at:

http://www.ispa.org.uk/html/media/content_liability.html.

The views expressed in this release are those of the Internet Services Providers' Association (ISPA UK) and do not necessarily reflect the corporate policies of the individual companies that are members of the Association or other organisations that may be mentioned in the release.

For further information, please contact the ISPA Press Office:

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About the Internet Services Providers' Association:

The Internet Services Providers' Association (ISPA) was established in 1995 as a trade association to represent providers of Internet services in the UK. ISPA promotes competition, self-regulation and the development of the Internet industry. For a list of members or other information about ISPA, please consult the website: www.ispa.org.uk

About the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

The IWF was launched in September 1996 to combat the problem of illegal material on the Internet, with particular reference to child pornography. It is an independent organisation set up to implement proposals jointly agreed by the Government, the police and Industry. For more information, please consult the website at www.iwf.org.uk