

Here is the news article with unnecessary parts removed:

The prime minister has been urged to close a legal loophole as online images of child sex abuse hit a record high in 2024.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a charity that removes child abuse images, has written to Sir Keir Starmer to warn that the new Online Safety Act will be a missed opportunity without his intervention.

The charity has published new data revealing 2024 was the worst year on record for online child sexual abuse imagery, with nearly 300,000 web pages uncovered, each containing at least one, if not hundreds or thousands, of images and videos.

The IWF acted to remove images or videos of children suffering sexual abuse, or links to that content, on 291,270 webpages, which is the most child sexual abuse webpages ever discovered in its 29-year history.

The new legislation needs to be toughened up to prevent social media companies dodging the duty to moderate, identify and remove child abuse images, said IWF chair Catherine Brown.

A government spokesperson said: "Child sexual exploitation and abuse is despicable and has a devastating impact on victims. UK law is clear - child sexual abuse is illegal and social media is no exception. Companies must ensure criminal activity cannot proliferate on their sites."

They explained that from March, under the Online Safety Act, companies will need to take robust action to tackle child abuse material when they become aware of it, training moderating teams to spot child exploitation and testing whether their algorithms are promoting this material.