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Dear Chris,

Online Safety Act 2023

Thank you for your contributions to Attorney General Questions on 9 May 2024. You asked an important question around the prosecution rates for the new offences introduced as part of the Online Safety Act 2023.

Tackling violence that disproportionately impacts women and girls remains one of this government's top priorities. Women and girls should be able to go about their lives without being subjected to unwanted sexual images. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutors are committed to tackling this unacceptable behaviour.

As you know, this government has recently enacted new offences designed to tackle online offending through the Online Safety Act 2023. This includes the offence of cyberflashing and other intimate image offences.

The CPS has welcomed the enactment of these new offences designed to target predatory behaviour and non-contact sexual offences. It has introduced comprehensive updates to prosecution guidance to support prosecutors to better recognise behaviour-driven and escalating offending. Additionally, it has published 'Communications Offences' legal guidance which includes online offences relating to violence against women and girls.

Whilst this legislation is still new, the police are referring more cases to the CPS for charging decisions and I can confirm the CPS secured their first conviction for cyberflashing in February 2024, resulting in the offender being jailed for 66 weeks at Southend Crown Court. I am unable to provide detail on any other cases where there may be live criminal proceedings.

Regrettably, I am unable to provide you with data on prosecutions under the Online Safety Act yet. However, in July the CPS will publish its next data summary covering the period January to March 2024 and after this summary release, more granular data may be shared publicly. This pause ahead of publishing data allows for quality assurance checks and internal scrutiny before publication.

I hope the above response proves useful. I will also place a copy in the House Library.

Yours,

Victoria Prentis

**RT HON VICTORIA PRENTIS KC MP
ATTORNEY GENERAL**