

PRESS RELEASE 31 OCTOBER 2018
USE TECH TAX TO END ONLINE ABUSE, SAY CAMPAIGNERS

A campaign has today been launched calling on the government to ring fence at least 1% of the new tech tax to end online abuse, bullying and violence.

The campaign, led by Glitch and supported by the Centenary Action Group and leading activists such as Helen Pankhurst and Laura Bates, is in response to the Chancellor's budget announcement on Monday that a new "tech tax" is expected to raise an additional £400m a year.

The campaigners are urging the Government to prioritise tackling online violence against women and girls. According to Amnesty International, one in five women having suffered online abuse or harassment in the UK. This can range from sexual harassment, stalking to rape and death threats. Campaigners say that investing at least 1% of the £400m the tech tax is expected to raise is a "small first step to start investing resources to end online violence against women". The campaigners are asking the Government to use the annual tax to:

- Carry out a mass public education campaign similar to those carried out on public safety issues such as drink driving
- Deliver on a UK Online Hate Crime Hub that the Home Secretary [announced in 2017](#)
- Pilot an e-Safety Commissioner focused on e-safety of women and girls and ending online abuse
- Increase police resources and capacity to adequately investigate and prosecute online abuse

Seyi Akiwowo, Executive Director of Glitch, said:

"One in five women have suffered online abuse or harassment in the UK. It is only right that social media companies while paying their fair share in supporting our public services, help end online abuse on their platforms."

"Investing now will not only save money in the long term, but will mean a safer web in our lifetime. It is time to fix the glitch."

Helen Pankhurst, who convened the Centenary Action Group, said:

"Today, women in politics still face an extraordinary amount of abuse. Whether that abuse is perpetrated online, in newspapers, on the street or in surgeries, women are targeted in particularly abusive ways because they are women - with multiple additional layers of vitriol for some women, based on colour, religion, sexuality, etc."

"In the year we are celebrating not just the centenary of the vote, but also the centenary of women being allowed to become MPs, we need to recognise the barriers and ensure that the voice of political women is amplified rather than silenced."

"Ringfencing at least 1% of the new digital services tax to end online abuse is a small but vital part of the solution."

Laura Bates, Founder of the Everyday Sexism Project, said:

"The hundreds of thousands of testimonies received by the Everyday Sexism Project have repeatedly revealed the ways in which sexism, harassment and abuse cross the borders between life on and offline."

“From teenage girls bombarded with unwanted 'dick pics', to women of colour subjected to vile racist and sexist abuse for expressing political opinions, to domestic abusers who use social media platforms as part of a wider pattern of stalking and harassment, these forms of abuse have very real offline impact.

“It is time the government took this problem seriously, time law enforcement caught up with crimes being committed online, and time tech companies delivered real support to the female users they profit from.”

ENDS

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Spokespeople available.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Glitch

Glitch is a small but ambitious not-for-profit organisation that exists to end online abuse. We want to see an increase in digital citizenship across all online users and to instil these beliefs: that our online community is just as real as our offline one and that we should all be working together to make it a better place. Fix the glitch now for a safer web tomorrow.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/GlitchUK>

Centenary Action Group

The Centenary Action Group are a cross-party campaigning coalition convened by Helen Pankhurst. We represent over 100 activists, politicians and women's rights organisations working in the worlds of domestic, international, and political policy and campaigns. Together, we are #StillMarching for women's right to take part in the decisions that affect their lives.

Website: <https://www.centenaryaction.org.uk/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CentenaryAction>

Everyday Sexism Project

The Everyday Sexism Project is an ever-increasing collection of hundreds of thousands of people's experiences of sexism, harassment, discrimination and abuse. With branches in over 20 countries worldwide, the project works with businesses, schools, universities, police forces and politicians to address gender inequality.

Website: <https://everydaysexism.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/EverydaySexism>

BACKGROUND

On Monday the 29th October 2018, the UK Chancellor of HM Treasury announced a new “digital services tax” of 2% on tech giants such as Facebook, Google and Amazon and is expected to raise an additional £400m a year.

- VAWG costs the UK £40bn a year, this includes online abuse (*New Philanthropy Capital, 2008*)
- Women are 27 time more likely to be harassed online, globally (*European Women’s Lobby, 2017*)
- Recent research by the Electoral Reform Society in Wales detailed a shocking level of abuse and harassment in politics, with 45.5% of respondents confirming that they had experienced some kind of abuse and harassment (*Electoral Reform Society, 2018*)
- A Westminster Foundation for Democracy report on violence against women in politics concluded that the harassment and intimidation of women in political life discourages many women from participating in political debate and impacts on the quality of political debate and democracy in the UK (*Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2018*)
- Women experienced online abuse or harassment at least once
- ¾ of women made some changes to the way they use social media platforms as a result of online abuse (*Amnesty International, Toxic Twitter Report, 2018*)
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women MPs receive 41% of abusive tweets (*Amnesty International, Toxic Twitter Report, 2018*)
- Diane Abbott received even more abuse in the six weeks leading up to 2017’s snap general election, when 45.14% of abusive tweets were aimed at her (*Amnesty International, 2017*)
- 73% girls close down their social media account (*Plan International, 2018*)

Online violence against politically active women, journalists and women human rights defenders is a global concern. Two reports from the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women’s on “Violence Against Women in Politics” and “Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective” assert that UN member states have obligations to eradicate and prevent violence against women and women in politics.

The Committee for Standard Public Life’s recommends that:

- Social media companies must do more to prevent users being inundated with hostile messages on their platforms, and to support users who become victims of this behaviour.
- Social media companies should actively provide advice, guidance and support to Parliamentary candidates on steps they can take to remain safe and secure while using their sites.