# MP Raises Concerns Over Smartphone-Related Child Exploitation



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Conservative MP Miriam Cates has called for legislation to protect children from the risks associated with smartphones, highlighting the daily occurrence of children being blackmailed into exposing themselves online. Cates delivered her remarks during a debate in Westminster Hall, urging the government to consider measures such as banning smartphones for under-16s.

SNP MP Alyn Smith supported the discussion by recounting the tragic case of Murray Dowey, a 16-year-old from Stirling, who died by suicide after falling victim to "sextortion" via Instagram.

Labour MP Sir Chris Bryant also contributed to the debate, suggesting an increase in mental health professionals in schools to address issues exacerbated by social media.

Technology Minister Saqib Bhatti countered the proposal for a smartphone ban, advocating instead for empowering parents to decide on their children's access to smartphones. Bhatti emphasized balancing protection with the benefits of connectivity and parental control.

The debate follows the enactment of the Online Safety Act in 2023, which mandates tech companies to prevent child access to harmful content and provide mechanisms for reporting issues.

A petition calling for a ban on smartphones for under-16s has garnered over 24,000 signatures, reflecting growing public concern over the issue.