

'Call to arms' as 110,000 sign petition against porn: Demand for tough online controls must be heard, MP tells parents

- **Pressure on PM David Cameron to act on concerns**
- **One-in-three 10-year-old have seen pornography online**



Concern: Claire Perry Conservative MP has described the internet as a 'Wild West'

Tens of thousands have joined the crusade to protect children by imposing an automatic block on online pornography.

A petition containing more than 110,000 names will be handed in to Downing Street next week, putting huge pressure on David Cameron to take tough action to make the internet a safer place.

More than 140 MPs from all parties have joined parents, teachers and church leaders to sign the petition, organised by the Safetynet campaign. It represents an unprecedented groundswell of opinion in favour of stricter controls.

Last night campaigning MP Claire Perry delivered a 'call to arms' to parents, urging even more of them to sign the petition and respond to the government consultation to ensure their voice is heard.

Under the scheme preferred by Safetynet, and backed by the Daily Mail, over-18s would only be able to access adult material if they specifically 'opt in' and go through an age check.

A wide range of children's charities, including the NSPCC and ChildLine, are demanding an 'opt-in' system.

Last week ChildLine published disturbing statistics showing that the number of children calling the helpline after having encountered hardcore porn on the internet had soared by a third in just one year.

The petition will be handed in next Thursday, to mark the end of a government consultation into whether parental controls should be strengthened.

Campaigners, led by Tory MP Mrs Perry, will also hand in a letter to Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt, who is in charge of internet policy. It will highlight some alarming facts, including that one-in-three ten-year-olds have stumbled on pornography online, and that the largest group of internet pornography consumers are aged 12 to 17.



Opt in: More and more people are signing the petition for stricter online controls for porn

Safetynet is a partnership between Premier Christian Radio and pressure group Safermedia.

Peter Kerridge, chief executive of Premier Christian Radio, said the petition demonstrated the clear and growing resolve among people from all sections of society to ensure that internet service providers are required to block hardcore content, including violent and abusive images.

Pippa Smith, founder and chairman of Safermedia, said: 'This petition is all about children – the most precious resource of any country.'



Back the campaign

'Overwhelming research shows that the internet is exposing millions of our children to the most hardcore pornography and on a scale never before seen.'

'It is totally within the power of the Government and ISPs to provide the best protection, which a universally adopted opt-in network-level filter would give. Our children deserve the best and the opt-in is the best protection.'

Mrs Perry, who earlier this year led a cross-party inquiry into the effect of online porn, said: 'The internet is a Wild West where there are no built-in barriers to stop even the youngest children stumbling across or seeking out porn websites, as well as pro-anorexia, suicide or self-harm material.'

In a message to parents, she said: 'If you can do one more thing this weekend in the hurly burly of back to school preparations, I would urge you to log on to the Department for Education website, download the consultation document and make your voice heard too. Or go to the Safermedia website and add your name to the petition.'

The consultation, on the Department for Education website, ends on Thursday. It can be reached on www.education.gov.uk.

The petition can still be signed at www.safetynet.org.uk.