

Jess Phillips MP
Member of Parliament
for Birmingham Yardley



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Dear Keir

I want to start by first saying that we have worked closely together on Violence Against Women and Girls for many years and I have no doubt you have genuine knowledge and desire to rectify this dreadful social ill. We have started to make steps towards change whilst in government and I have been grateful for your support.

However, it would be remiss of me not to say that real change and direction in this area usually came from threats made by me in light of catastrophic mistakes. The Mandelson saga whenever it bubbled up made Number 10 kick into gear on the subject in order to prove our credentials. I will never waste a crisis to make advancements for women and girls and so demands were made and some were met.

I think you are a good man fundamentally, who cares about the right things however I have seen first-hand how that is not enough. The desire not to have an argument means we rarely make an argument, leaving opportunities for progress stalled and delayed.

Over a year ago I presented solutions, long worked on by brilliant civil servants that would end the ability for children in the UK to take naked images of themselves. 91% of online child sex abuse is self-generated by children groomed, tricked and exploited in to abuse. The technology exists to stop children being able to take naked images of themselves. We could make this possible on every phone and device in the country. We could stop this abuse. It has taken me a year to get you to agree to even threaten to legislate in this space. Not legislate, just threaten. This is the definition of incremental change. Nothing bold about it. The announcement was meant to be in March, I'm still on a promise this will happen in June, I've given up believing it. How many children were left without a safety net in the time we dilly dallied and worried about tech bosses?

This is just one example.

Labour governments come around rarely is the constant refrain at the moment. It's true they are precious. Every Labour government in my and my family's lifetime has forged progress that changed our country and the world for the better. I know you care deeply, but deeds, not words are what matter. I'm not sure we are grasping this rare opportunity with the gusto that's needed and I cannot keep waiting around for a crisis to push for faster progress.

Decency is vital, calm curiosity is also needed, but so too are fight and drive required. Have a row, push back, make arguments, bring people along. Standing up and being counted can't always be workshopped. Politics is as much about feelings as policy, especially at the moment.

I want a Labour government to work and I will strive as I always have for its success and popularity, but I'm not seeing the change I think I, and the country expect, and so cannot continue to serve as a minister under the current leadership.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jess Phillips".

Jess Phillips MP
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