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# Best Practice in the Management of Online Sex Offending

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# BEST PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ONLINE SEX OFFENDING

INTERNATIONAL WORKING  
GROUP FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF ONLINE SEX OFFENDING  
(IWG\_OSO)

2019

# Acknowledgements

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Our warmest thanks are also given to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) for their advice and partnership with us on the release of this report.

The IWG\_OSO co-founders would also like to thank all members and contributors to this report. We extend particular thanks to Andy Baker, Prof. Andy Phippen, and Emma Tyrrell.

Finally, we would also like to offer special thanks to Hannah Bradshaw, for her excellent work on the design and production of this report.

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# Welcome from our co-founders

*“ We welcome you to this report, which has evolved over the last four years in response to the growing problem, in scale and complexity, of online sexual offending. There is a particular focus on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people through the internet, including online child sexual exploitation material offending. We hope that the report’s contents will be useful and its recommendations helpful in international efforts to effectively manage and prevent online child sexual offending behaviours, so that we might better safeguard children and society from the impact of this abuse and exploitation. ”*

- Maggie Brennan, Hannah Merdian, & Derek Perkins

## About the IWG\_OSO

The International Working Group for the Prevention of Online Sex Offending (IWG\_OSO) was established as a response to the problem of online sexual offending and, in particular, offending involving Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM).

IWG\_OSO’s initiation was enabled through the patronage of the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders (IATSO) in 2014 by a group of practitioners and researchers working in the field of online child sexual abuse and exploitation offending.

We look to develop a framework for better offence management and prevention, with our stakeholders including those who work in law enforcement (e.g. INTERPOL and the UK National Crime Agency), the online industry, child protection, and in offender management and treatment services.





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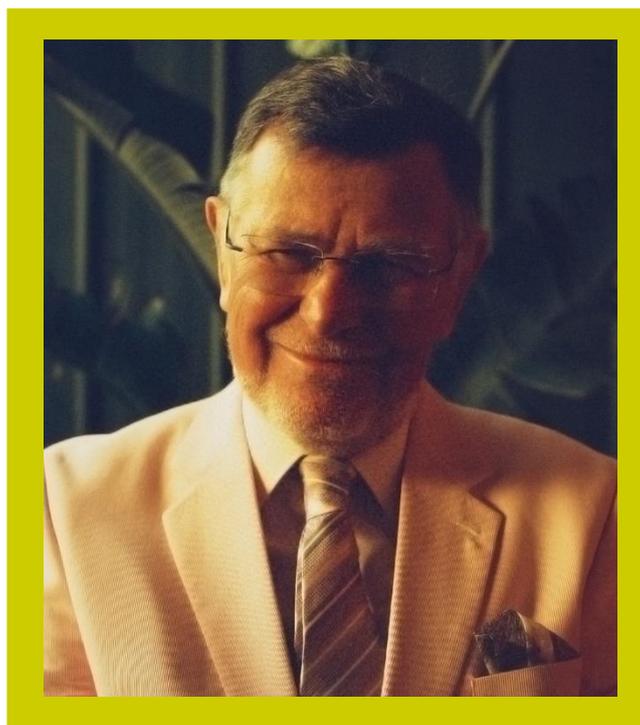


**Kieran McCartan (PhD)** is a Professor at the University of the West of England, an Adjunct at the Queensland University of Technology, and a visiting Fellow at the University of Huddersfield. He is on the ATSA and NOTA committees, a member of the confederation of the European working group on sexual offences and advises the Council of Europe on sexual offending.

# A message from: Arnon Bentovim

*“The development of the internet is an example of a ‘disruptive innovation’ – the development of a simpler and less expensive alternative for communication and knowledge transfer that meets the essential needs for most consumers and is more accessible, scalable, replicable, and sustainable. The internet has created many opportunities in education, politics, science, social networking, business, and leisure. Interpersonal communication between individuals has been facilitated in an extraordinary way. However, there are costs, and I’m talking specifically about the sexual exploitation of children and young people. The presence of CSEM on the internet has reached epidemic levels; law enforcement agencies across 28 countries are reported as processing offences relating to the use of such material at an unprecedented level.*

*It is therefore timely that an International Working Group has been developed to scope and gather information internationally on definitions, nature and prevalence of CSEM, identify and develop best practice guidelines, and increase research capacity to further develop understanding. The Working Group will seek agreement from stakeholders on how we can reduce the availability of such material on the web, deter the use of such material through education, and devise approaches for relevant law-enforcement and therapeutic agencies to prevent the inappropriate use of CSEM.*



*There are many initiatives internationally to end or eradicate child maltreatment and violence against children and women. The initiative by the International Working Group to confront the harmful impact of child sexual exploitation material is an essential complement in establishing a world free of abuse against children and young people. The internet confers such benefits to mankind; it needs to be freed from the harmful effects of child sexual exploitation.*

*I strongly support the work of the International Working Group, and its goals. ”*

**Life President, Lucy Faithfull Foundation, UK**



# Key recommendations

## Promote public engagement

To reduce the stigma involved for people in coming forward for help with a pre-offending sexual interest in children.

## Develop international agreements

To promote prevention-focused initiatives and related evaluation research via best practice.

## Find a balance

Between punitive measures and therapeutic responses, with a gradual but determined, publicly acceptable shift of emphasis to primary and secondary prevention methods.

## Effective training and development

To support case prioritisation and resource deployment within law enforcement via continuous professional development on the rapidly evolving nature of online technology and emerging research findings on online sex offending behaviours.

## Introduce earlier intervention methods

To help reach potential offenders before the need for law enforcement, such as an expansion of anonymous helplines, splash pages and public education, which may also help to reduce stigma.

## Develop programmes of prevention-focused research

To more effectively manage and prevent online sex offending behaviour, notably in the development of appropriate risk assessment and treatment initiatives.

## Closer collaboration with the online industry

Professionals engaged in child sexual exploitation and abuse research, treatment, management and prevention should work more closely with the providers of online platforms and services to help design situational barriers for the prevention of offending behaviour online – e.g. working with providers of adult pornography websites in the introduction of splash pages and deterrence messages targeting those at risk of committing online CSEM offences.

# Executive summary

Our report sets out the outcomes from reviews of the relevant literature, and a series of consultations held by IWG\_OSO, with participation from practitioners and researchers working in the field of child protection and online sex offending.

## Online sex offending

Internationally, researchers and practitioners have documented rises in the scale and impact of online sex offending, including the grooming of minors and vulnerable people for sexual purposes, sexual trafficking, and most dramatically, child sexual exploitation material and the related offences of its possession, production and distribution.

Such a 'high volume crime' outweighs the capacity for effective management and prevention through the strategies and resources currently being used. This makes prosecution and case management increasingly difficult.

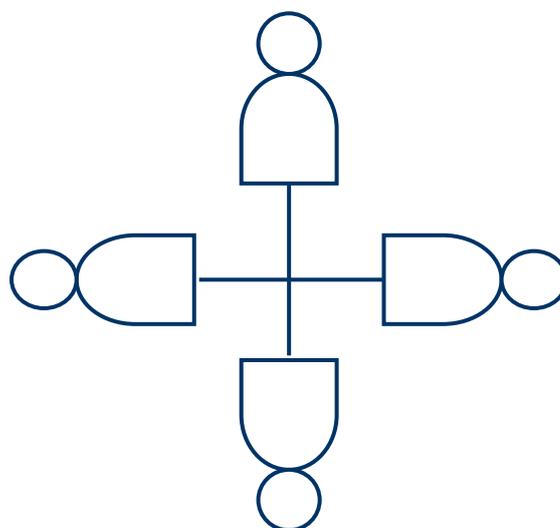
## Challenges to good practice

Without empirically based good practice, professionals are unable to deal effectively with the prevention of online sex offending, risk-management, and treatment decisions.

This creates major limitations for the police, courts, probation, child protection, and other services, which are working to protect and safeguard children from online child sexual offenders, and to manage and prevent offending behaviours.

## Current issues and possible solutions

A series of current issues were highlighted, with possible solutions offered by IWG\_OSO stakeholders. These included suggestions for changes in: international policy on CSEM offending; working with the internet industry; policing issues; research concerns; risk assessment and treatment developments; inter-agency and multi-disciplinary collaboration; barriers to change; and preventative methods.



## Conclusions

1. ↑ Arresting and prosecuting offenders
2. ↑ Earlier interventions and primary and secondary prevention
3. ↑ Research to aid risk assessments, treatment options and prevention approaches
4. ↑ International collaboration and consistency in applying learning to policy and practice

# Background

Technology has played a significant role in the escalation of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, with the internet making it easier for perpetrators to: (1) connect; (2) access and exchange CSEM; and (3) share such material internationally (Home Office, 2018). The IWG\_OSO refers to *Online Sex Offending (OSO)* to describe internet-facilitated sexually abusive or exploitative behaviours. The breadth of this term is purposeful to be responsive to, and inclusive of, the range of legal and user-defined frameworks an international community provides – currently and as technology evolves.

## ‘Child pornography’

The term ‘child pornography’ is inherently problematic – it encourages conceptualisation of this material as simply a sub-category of legal pornography, whereas in reality, it is recorded child sexual abuse and exploitation.

These materials are now more appropriately described using terms such as Indecent Images of Children (IIOC), Child Sexual Abuse Images (CSAI), Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or, as in this report, Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM).

CSEM offending often overlaps and interacts with ‘live streamed’ sexual exploitation of children, frequently in developing countries, and ‘online solicitation’ of sexual contact with children, which can also be a precursor to contact child sexual abuse.

The emergence and hijacking of youth-produced sexual materials (e.g. those produced in the context of ‘sexting’ behaviour) further complicates this offending challenge.

**In 2018, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) confirmed 105,047 Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) as containing CSAI**

## Child sexual abuse

“The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.”

- WHO, 1999, p.15

## Child exploitation

“Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.”

- WHO, 1999, p.16

## Online sexual exploitation

“...a widely used term to refer both to the sexual abuse of children that is facilitated by ICTs (e.g. online grooming) and to sexual abuse of children that is committed elsewhere and then repeated by sharing it online through, for instance, images and videos (which is where it becomes exploitation...)”

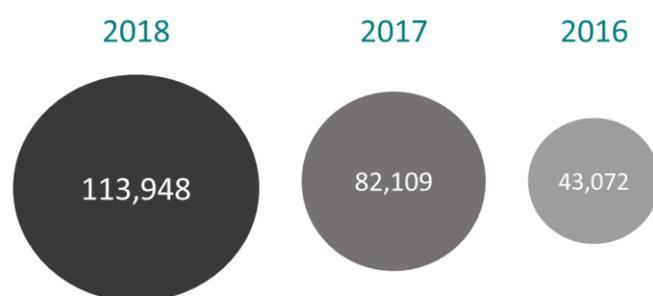
- Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016, p.28

## Challenges to law enforcement and offender management

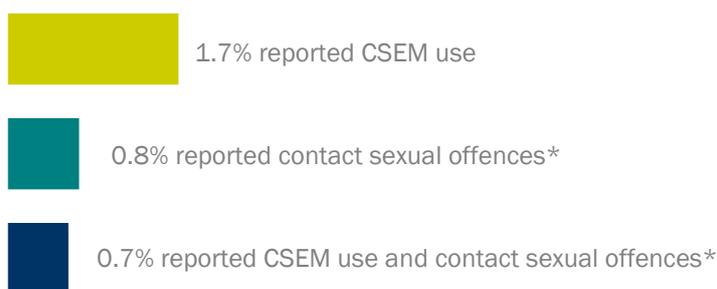
A recent international survey of law enforcement agencies across 30 countries found technological developments, such as self-produced material, cryptocurrencies, and image manipulation, limit law enforcement capacity to prevent, detect, and prosecute online child sexual offending behaviour (NetClean, 2018).

Moreover, “investigators still have to deal with significant numbers of offenders committing preventable crimes such as viewing and sharing indecent images and videos known to law enforcement” (National Crime Agency, 2018a). Instead, online platforms should look to design-out an offender’s capacity to share indecent images and videos, to prevent such online offences from happening.

NSPCC’s report ‘How Safe are our Children?’ indicated the number of sexual offences against children by online means continues to rise in the UK (Bentley et al., 2016)



Number of UK related industry referrals of online CSA/E (NCA, 2019)



German survey of adult sexual interest in children, men only (n = 8,718; Dombert et al., 2016)

\*against children

## The need for better management and prevention

The aforementioned concerns regarding the scale of the problem resonates with earlier concerns voiced by community-based sex offender treatment providers.

Beier et al. (2009) suggests that detected and convicted sexual offenders are only “the tip of the iceberg”, and that there exists a considerable number of undetected adults with a sexual interest in children outside of law enforcement’s control, with official offending rates underestimating the true rates of offending behaviour (Beier et al., 2015),

Estimates of the number of men with a sexual interest in children vary between 0.1-5% of the population (Seto, 2009).

# Risk assessment and management

Sexual offences against children have long been an issue of major concern, and methods and strategies for assessing and managing risk and treating these offenders have gradually been developed and utilised globally.

This has been through a combination of (Hanson et al., 2017):

- i. Criminogenic needs (factors that are predictive of criminal recidivism, such as offence-related sexual interests and offence-supportive beliefs); and
- ii. Non-criminogenic needs (factors that help offenders engage with treatment and desist from relapsing).

Whilst a growing body of research on online child sexual offenders is emerging, it is still limited and fragmented in terms of types of study, its accessibility to frontline practitioners, and its applicability within different jurisdictions for which tackling CSEM offending is a recognised objective.

Countries vary in their legal, policing and offender management strategies for combating online sexual abuse and exploitation, with differing knowledge exchange between researchers and practitioners, both nationally and internationally. This impacts on professionals' ability to effectively manage and prevent online child sexual offending behaviour.

International efforts to combat online child sexual abuse and exploitation have maintained an emphasis on initiatives to prosecute offenders, control the flow of CSEM (e.g. via 'hotlines' for reporting illegal content), and to promote young internet users' online safety.

However, there is a need for a co-ordinated, international effort to develop strategies for the prevention of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, particularly with regards to assessment, treatment and management of these behaviours.



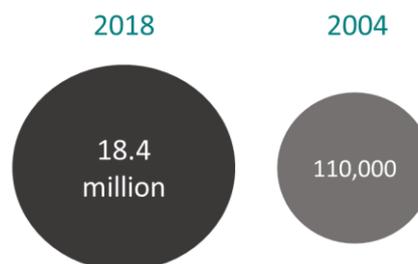
## Current measures

Within law enforcement, INTERPOL, Europol, and other national agencies have been effective in identifying and cataloguing online CSEM, to better enable the prosecution of offenders and the rescuing of children identified in CSEM.

There is a need to accelerate international policies or initiatives to build upon such efforts and to support the wider transfer of knowledge, including its application to inform prevention efforts.

For example, the non-profit organisation *Thorn* combats online sexual abuse and exploitation by working with law enforcement, the government and tech experts to build products, programmes and resources to aid the identification of victims of sexual offences, deter abusers, and disrupt their online networks (<https://www.wearethorn.org>).

However, the lack of consistent emphasis on the development and integration of good practice in the management and prevention of online sex offending, **including by the tech industry**, imposes severe structural implications for the police, the courts, probation, child protection, and other services, particularly as challenges of offending scale continue to mount.



Number of **global** referrals received by National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC; NCA, 2019)

# Current good practice measures

With an increase in the scale, severity, and complexity of online sex offending, governments and organisations are looking to establish and deliver a suitable response, both nationally and globally.

## International online sex offending management and elimination

### Project Arachnid

Developed through the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, *Arachnid* can be utilised across the internet as means of detecting illegal child sexual abuse and exploitation content. When illegal content is detected, a take-down notice is sent to ISPs. In 2017, the UK Government invested £600,000 to assist in the expansion of *Arachnid*, as a means of enabling internet companies to identify and remove online sexual offending material. As of January 2019, *Arachnid* was processing 150,000 images per second, and had detected 7.5 million suspected images of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

### CEASE.ai

CEASE.ai was developed by Two Hat Security in collaboration with Canadian law enforcement as a means of detecting and flagging child sexual abuse and exploitation material across social platforms online. This content may then be referred to investigators who act to remove the material and associated offending and victimisation.

### helplinks.eu

helplinks.eu is an informational resource site comprising a collection of 'get help' links that are available, country dependent, to those who are looking for help in managing their sexual interest in children. The site has attracted more than 30,000 individual users from 170 countries.

The map below is representative of the proportions of unique visitors per country who have visited the helplinks.eu website. The greater the intensity of colour, the more visitors.



## WePROTECT Global Alliance Model National Response (MNR)

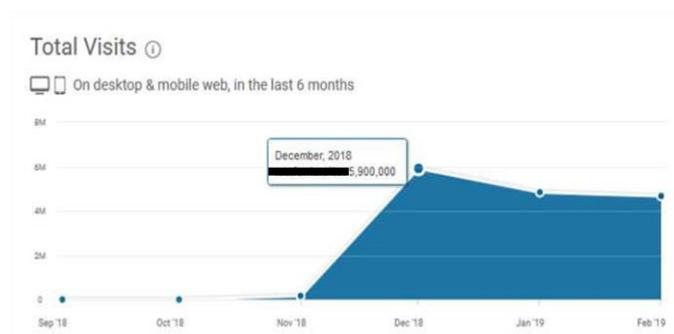
The MNR, developed as means of supporting countries in improving their response to online child sexual offending, builds on the work of experts and practitioners to establish an international framework for combating and preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation. The model describes the capabilities needed by a country for effective child protection, considering aspects related to policy and governance, criminal justice, society, industry, media and communications, and victim support. It enables a country to assess its current response, such that national efforts can be implemented to fill any identified gaps in the national response to this problem.

The image below, taken from WePROTECT (2016), illustrates the MNR’s capabilities.

<b>Policy and Governance</b> 	1	<b>Leadership:</b> An accountable National Governance and Oversight Committee
	2	<b>Research, Analysis and Monitoring:</b> National situational analysis of CSEA risk and response; measurements/indicators
	3	<b>Legislation:</b> Comprehensive and effective legal framework to investigate offenders and ensure protection for victims
<b>Criminal Justice</b> 	4	<b>Dedicated Law Enforcement:</b> National remit; trained officers; proactive and reactive investigations; victim-focused; international cooperation
	5	<b>Judiciary and Prosecutors:</b> Trained; victim-focused
	6	<b>Offender Management Process:</b> Prevent re-offending of those in the criminal justice system nationally and internationally
	7	<b>Access to Image Databases:</b> National database; link to Interpol database (ICSE)
<b>Victim</b> 	8	<b>End to end support:</b> Integrated services provided during investigation, prosecution and after-care
	9	<b>Child Protection Workforce:</b> Trained, coordinated and available to provide victim support
	10	<b>Compensation, remedies and complaints arrangements:</b> Accessible procedures
	11	<b>Child Helpline:</b> Victim reporting and support; referrals to services for ongoing assistance
<b>Societal</b> 	12	<b>CSEA Hotline:</b> Public and industry reporting for CSEA offences - online and offline; link to law enforcement and child protection systems
	13	<b>Education Programme:</b> For: children/young people; parents/carers; teachers; practitioners; faith representatives
	14	<b>Child Participation:</b> Children and young people have a voice in the development of policy and practice
	15	<b>Offender Support Systems:</b> Medical, psychological, self-help, awareness.
<b>Industry</b> 	16	<b>Notice and Takedown Procedures:</b> Local removal and blocking of online CSEA content
	17	<b>CSEA Reporting:</b> Statutory protections that would allow industry to fully and effectively report CSEA, including the transmission of content, to law enforcement or another designated agency
	18	<b>Innovative Solution Development:</b> Industry engagement to help address local CSEA issues
	19	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility:</b> Effective child-focused programme
<b>Media and Communications</b> 	20	<b>Ethical and informed media reporting:</b> Enable awareness and accurate understanding of problem
	21	<b>Universal terminology:</b> Guidelines and application

## INTERPOL worst-of list (IWOL)

IWOL lists domains that contain very severe CSEM. Such information is shared with all commercial providers in INTERPOL countries as a means of reducing the availability of this material, free of charge. IWOL adds, on average, 50-100 new domains and subdomains each week – one such domain had 5.9 million visits in a month.



Available globally since 2010, the IWOL is shared with any Internet Service Provider (ISP) or other service provider willing to participate in reducing the availability of CSEM. The criteria for inclusion of a domain within IWOL are very strict and require that: (1) the children featured in the imagery must be real; (2) are prepubescent or in the early stages of puberty (perceived to be <13 years old); (3) the imagery depicts sexual abuse or has a sexualized focus on the genitalia/anal area of the child; and (4) the domains must have been reviewed and found to fulfil the above criteria by at least two independent agencies.

## Online sex offending management and elimination in the UK

The UK has implemented a series of measures to step up its efforts to detect, manage and eliminate online CSEM and related offending behaviour, such as the Lucy Faithfull Foundation's OSO deterrence campaign (see page 30). Several such initiatives, identified to us by our consensus groups, are documented in this report as instances of good practice. The inclusion of UK management and prevention initiatives is further rationalised by the recent ranking of the UK in top position in *Out of the Shadows* (<https://outoftheshadows.eiu.com>), a multi-country benchmarking report which compared the quality of national responses to sexual violence against children.

### Out of the Shadows

A 60-country benchmarking index report, *Out of the shadows: Shining light on the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation* examines how countries are responding to sexual violence against children. Scored using weighted averages across a range of indicators, it explores a country's environment and legal frameworks, the extent to which governmental commitment and capacity is being deployed to suitably address the problem, and the engagement of industry, civil society, and media to this end.

The index shows the UK scored most highly. This suggests the UK has a commitment and an approach to tackling online sexual offending which deserves further examination such that good practice may be adapted (as appropriate), and similar results extended to other jurisdictions.

### 'Flaw in the Law' Campaign

In April 2017, it became a criminal offence to engage in sexual messaging with a child. This followed the NSPCC's successful 2014 *'Flaw in the Law'* campaign, which called for a new offence that made it always illegal for an adult to send a sexual message to a child. Over 80% of people surveyed by the NSPCC agreed such an act should be illegal, with three quarters of respondents thinking that it already was.

The relevant legislation, Section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, served to insert a new Section (15A) to the 2003 Sexual Offences Act. This legislation came into effect in April 2017, making it possible to prosecute adults who intentionally send a sexually inappropriate message to a child under 16 in England and Wales for the purpose of sexual gratification.

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*"In a world of mobile phones and social media, children are ever more vulnerable to those who prey on their innocence and exploit their trust. The best way of protecting our young people from the evils of child abuse is to stop it happening in the first place. This new offence will give the Courts the powers to jail anyone who sends a sexual communication to a child and stop the process of grooming before it starts"*

- Justice Secretary Liz Truss

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## Wild West Web

The NSPCC's current 'Wild West Web' campaign, with strong ties to the measures proposed in the *Online Harms White Paper* (HM Government, 2019), calls on the Government to regulate online social networks to make the internet a safer place for children, with the implementation of an independent regulator to moderate mandatory child safety rules across these platforms and services.

## Online Harms White Paper

In April 2019, the *Online Harms White Paper* was launched by the UK Government in response to the prevalence of illegal and unacceptable content and activity online, specifically online CSEM. It proposes a system of accountability and oversight for tech companies, encompassing a new regulatory framework for online safety. This framework foresees the establishment of a new statutory duty of care for companies to tackle harmful content and activity on their services. Its compliance will be overseen and enforced by an independent regulator. The paper proposes that the regulator will establish a code of practice.

This will require companies to:

- > Work to prevent exploitative or abusive online content and activity, e.g. taking steps to prevent searches linking to such activity and content;
- > Take prompt, transparent and efficient action in response to online offending and to support subsequent law enforcement investigations;
- > Continually review efforts to tackle online sex offending behaviour, e.g., to adapt internal processes and technology accordingly.

To support such efforts, the government is investing £300,000 to fund up to five projects that develop or utilise new technology to disrupt live online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)

Introduced at the WePROTECT Summit in 2014, the CAID is a national policing system that enhances the capability of UK police forces and the National Crime Agency (NCA) to investigate cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation by supporting the identification of victims and offenders in the online material. The CAID is also used to detect images with matching scenes as a means of identifying locations, which further assists in victim and offender identification.

Subsequent to the introduction of CAID, UK law enforcement agencies identified 664 victims in 2017/18, compared with 55 victims in 2012/13 (NCA, 2019). Further, using the CAID, new tools are also being developed, in conjunction with the UK Home Office, to develop the capability to automatically identify and categorise images based on the severity of the material (Category A, B, or C).

## Report Remove

The IWF, NSPCC, NCMEC, the UK Home Office and the NCA are currently working collaboratively to develop a procedure that enables a child to report self-generated indecent images so they can be taken down. Whilst the process is still being finalised, it will essentially involve a young person making a *Report Remove* referral as follows:

- i. Using an online application, the age of the person making the report is likely to be verified, with the NSPCC handling any associated safeguarding issues;
- ii. The image will be assessed by the IWF, and any illegal images hashed and flagged as being from Report Remove;
- iii. These hashes will be added to the NGO sharing platform hosted by the NCMEC; and any matches reported back to the NCMEC under mandatory reporting laws;
- iv. The NCA will take account of the report remove flag in its triage.

# What we did

In order to scope the nature of, and professional opinions on, the management and prevention of CSEM offending, the IWG\_OS0: (1) reviewed the literature on online sexual offending; (2) conducted a Delphi survey with international experts in the relevant areas; and (3) held a series of international consultation events with stakeholders in the management and prevention of online child sexual offending behaviour.

## Stakeholder consultations

In addition to the Delphi survey, the IWG\_OS0 has held extensive multi-annual consultations with organisations and stakeholders involved in management and prevention of online sex offending internationally.

The consultations were held between 2014 and 2019 at a range of key events, including at the IATSO and NOTA conferences, and involved clinicians, law enforcement professionals, researchers, policy makers, and offender managers and other stakeholders, including: NSPCC UK, INTERPOL, and the UK NCA.

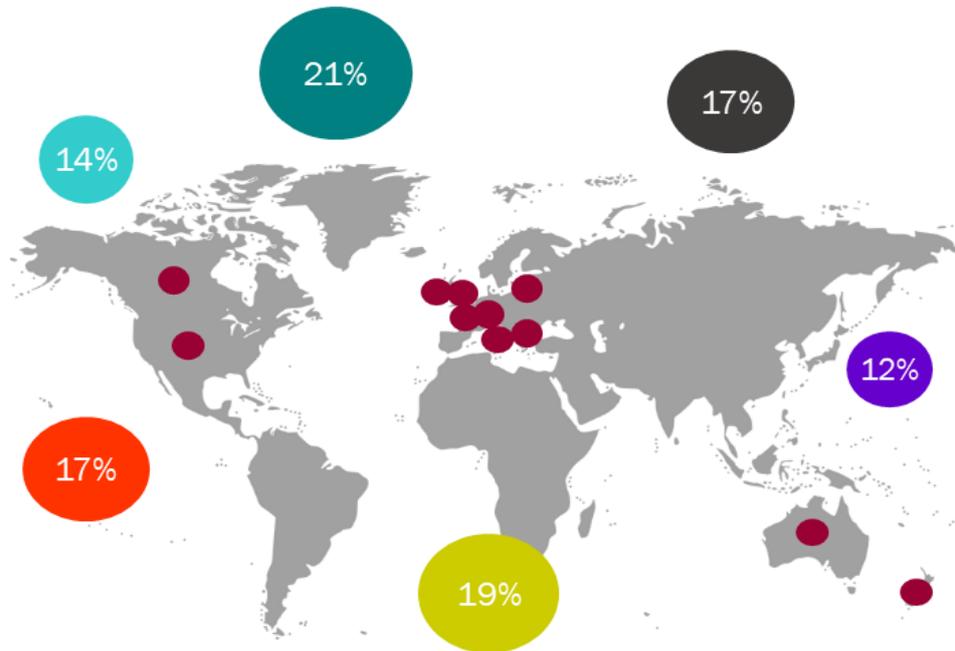
These consultations have allowed the IWG\_OS0 to extend the scope of its feedback to a wide range of jurisdictions, to consider recent developments in online sexual offending, and associated management and prevention responses.



- Porto, Sep. 2014; 13<sup>th</sup> IATSO Conference
- London, Apr. 2015; NCA-CEOP Command
- Dublin, Sep. 2015; NOTA Annual Conference
- Copenhagen, Sep. 2016; 14<sup>th</sup> IATSO Conference
- Lyon, Nov. 2016; INTERPOL Meeting of Specialists
- Dublin, Jun. 2017; NOTA Ireland Conference
- Ljubljana, Sep. 2017; Center for Safer Internet Conference
- Vilnius, Aug. 2018; 15<sup>th</sup> IATSO Conference

## Delphi survey 2016

This survey, drawn from approximately 2,000 initial participants, comprised a May-June 2016 'Delphi' consultation. Participants responded to a series of increasingly focused questions to arrive at a final position of expert consensus on issues the management and prevention of online child sex offending behaviour. The full methodology and results, reported by Tyrrell (2016), involved a wide range of stakeholder professionals across 11 countries.



- The 11 countries
- Law enforcement
- Academics/researchers
- Treatment/intervention providers
- Mental health services
- Policy makers/government bodies
- Charities/NGOs



The combined results from these different consultations were described in terms of key challenges (∞) and examples of good practice (⊗) under two naturally forming headings:

## Pre-conviction: 'Policing, Investigation and Prosecution'

### Investigative workflows

- ∞ Online child sex offending is now a high-volume crime requiring intensive investigation.
- ⊗ Police Scotland introduced a policy decision to charge/prosecute at earliest possible juncture in order to reduce processing time for forensic examination.

### Risk-related decision making

- ∞ Difficulty making assessments of risk and offence severity due to a high caseload.
- ⊗ The Dutch National Police operates Behavioural Investigative Advice within its child exploitation team to support risk-related decision-making, research and policy.
- ⊗ Development of investigative decision supports; e.g. the KIRAT (Long et al., 2013); P2P STePS (Brennan & Hammond, 2016); iCOP (Peersman et al., 2016) for case prioritisation decisions.

### Prevention

- ∞ The need for law enforcement to effectively contribute to offence prevention.
- ⊗ To enable this, more information is needed about offender subtypes and their risks and policing guidelines that manage the interface between prevention and prosecution.
- ⊗ This latter requirement may involve the development of government-led national policing strategies for the prevention of online sexual offending material, such as that established as part of the UK government's Prevent strategy.

## Post-conviction: 'Treatment, Desistance, and Deterrence'

### Targeted, proportionate interventions

- ∞ Academic research suggests that CSEM reoffending risk is low, and treatments designed for contact offending may not be relevant or counterproductive.
- ⊗ Provision of confidential helplines (e.g. Stop It Now!) to engage offenders/potential offenders as soon as possible.
- ⊗ Evidence that community support (e.g. Circles of Support and Accountability) can play a role for medium to high-risk offenders.

### Offence escalation and 'crossover'

- ∞ The need to identify the small number of individuals whose offending escalates to more severe CSEM and/or contact offending.
- ⊗ Babchishin et al. (2014) differentiated CSEM vs. contact offence-related propensities and situational factors. onlinePROTECT pathways model working towards identifying pathways to online child sex offending and offending subtypes (Merdian et al., 2018).
- ⊗ The Child Pornography Risk Assessment Tool (CPORT; Eke, Seto, & Helmus, 2018) identifies risk factors indicative of future offending behaviour.

### Deterrence and prevention

- ∞ The need for at-risk groups to be deterred/prevented from offending.
- ⊗ Adoption of public health model and campaigns (e.g. UK's Lucy Faithful Foundation has shown that deterrence films affect public attitudes).

The international scope of the problem, policing across diverse cultural and legislative jurisdictions, and the need for research on aetiologies and pathways to offending across different offender groups, were highlighted as major issues of concern.

This includes online offender-to-offender networks organising child sexual abuse, transnational sexual abuse, and child trafficking and live streaming of sexual abuse.

Participants in the Delphi survey questioned whether it is feasible to envisage a unified policy and legal framework for online sex offending internationally. For example, whilst most United Nations (UN) countries define a child as being under 18 years, sanctions vary considerably; in the US a first-time offender convicted on producing “child pornography” faces fines and a statutory minimum of 13-30 years in prison (under 18 U.S.C. § 2251). In other countries, such activity is not illegal.

Notwithstanding, our respondents indicated that the WePROTECT Model National Response framework may be adopted as a means of coordinating national, regional, and international responses to child sexual abuse and exploitation. Recent reports indicate membership of WePROTECT Global Alliance (2018) now stands at 82 governments, 20 global technology companies, and 24 international and non-governmental organisations, with a call for international law, policy, and enforcement frameworks surrounding online offending material to focus on developing a consistent approach to:

- i. Global standards;
- ii. Regulating online spaces, anonymity and industry input;
- iii. Interoperability and collaborative justice;
- iv. Safeguarding as a priority.

Participants noted a lack of understanding on the issue of online CSEM offending amongst governments and policymakers.

Further, the need for legislative changes in terms of reducing, and otherwise better managing, CSEM offending was highlighted in:

- i. Making ISPs more responsible for such content via publishing the details of the platforms/companies where CSEM offending is occurring;
- ii. Enabling people with a sexual interest in children not to act on their sexual urges via support and education (extending this criminal issue into a health and social issue that is managed using a whole systems approach);
- iii. Establishing clear international standards and guidelines for better management of youth-involved sexual images.

Such legislative issues are further evidenced in the *Online Harms White Paper*, which proposes to create a new regulatory framework whereby a global coalition of countries is developed, all of whom take coordinated steps to keep online users safe.

Participants also agreed that developing countries may benefit from financial and logistic assistance in order to tackle corruption, cultural differences, and other, similar precipitating conditions for OSO. Socio-economic differences across locations may be a contributing factor to online sex offending, such as the live streaming of child sexual abuse; arguably this offence is closer to a form of remotely operated contact sexual abuse (ECPAT International, 2018).

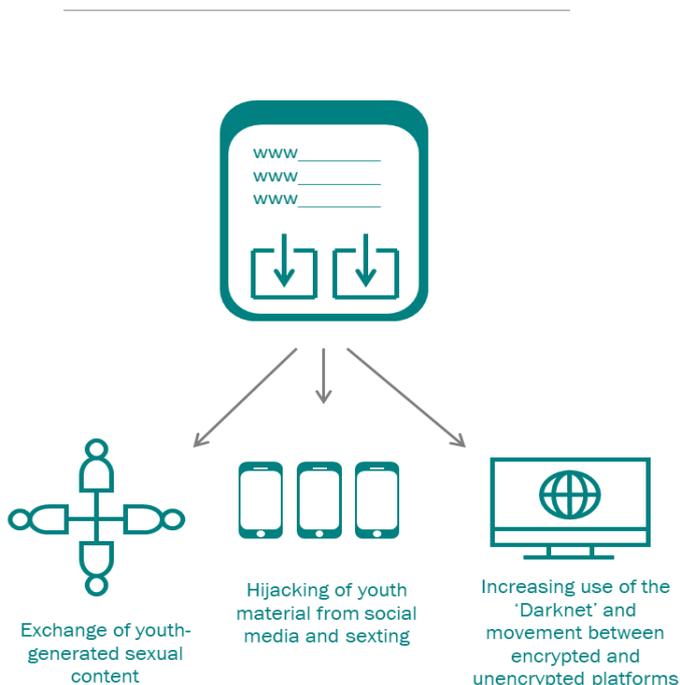
Further, participants called for a shift towards broadening prevention approaches and a public understanding of CSEM offending through a wider, public information campaign, similar to that of Project Protect Dunkelfeld (PPD) operating in Germany. However, the German law, which allows for medical confidentiality in such cases, is different from that in the UK, US and Canada, for example, where any disclosures of past offending must be reported.

# Working with the internet industry

Building upon the strategies for combatting abusive and exploitative online content and activity, it was suggested that prevention efforts could be assisted by internet and Electronic Service Providers, for example through situational barriers to online offending, such as 'splash pages' and deterrence messages.

However, survey participants questioned the feasibility of this approach, highlighting the need to take into account changing trends in how such content is being produced and shared. The image below depicts such changes with reference to CSEM, with the move from downloading images from webpages to other means.

Participants suggested that professionals engaged in CSEM research, treatment, management and prevention should also work more closely with the providers of online platforms and services to help design these situational barriers for the prevention of CSEM offending behaviour online.



Participants also argued it may be feasible to engage with the adult pornography industry in a targeted and nuanced way. A particularly effective tactic may be to track cookies and hone-in on potential offenders (e.g. by sending 'pop up' warning messages to those who spend most of their time in the 'teen' category to act as a deterrent).

Some countries have established bespoke requirements of the online industry in order to facilitate a reduction in content and activity related to child sexual exploitation and abuse online. The UK *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* (HM Government, 2018), supported by the NCA, requires that companies must:

1. Block OSO material as soon as detected;
2. Stop online grooming taking place on their platforms;
3. Work with government and law enforcement agencies to stop live-streaming of child abuse;
4. Proactively assist in helping law enforcement agencies deal with CSE;
5. Be more open, transparent, and willingly share best practice and technology between companies;
6. Not support sites that contain sexual abusive or exploitative content, including via advertising.

This is built upon by the NCA's three specific asks [NCA, 2018b] of the industry as a means of combatting online sex offending:

- i. Pre-screening and prefiltering of material; preventing the upload and download of known CSEM.
- ii. Kitemarking; a public accreditation for a website or platform that has met a certain standard of safety.
- iii. Research & Design; industry members develop a budget to design safeguards into all their products.

One of the key questions underpinning future empirical developments is the feasibility of identifying certain demographic, personality, or situation characteristics of those more 'at-risk' of committing contact sexual offenders from CSEM-exclusive offenders.

Participants highlighted the current limitations on the depth and scope of research conducted on CSEM offenders. It was suggested more research is needed on:

- > The aetiology, assessment and treatment of CSEM-exclusive offenders, including longitudinal research;
- > Potential offenders' strengths and desistance-enhancing factors;
- > Those who sexually solicit children online, as most research currently focuses on solicitation offenders caught during police investigations ('stings');
- > Possible changes in recidivism rates for CSEM offending populations in response to recent law enforcement experiences and the severity of CSEM.



Participants also highlighted the need for research to be carried out on the impact of the internet environment on offending and desistance, with comparisons between CSEM users and legal pornography viewers, base rates of viewing CSEM, the scale and features of undetected CSEM users, and features and processes related to youth CSEM users.

More recent consultation indicates law enforcement findings may differ marginally from those of academic papers. Published research indicates that recidivism is low in CSEM-exclusive offenders; however, in recent consultation with law enforcement it has been suggested, based on increased operational activity, that recidivism rates for CSEM offenders may be higher than rates indicated in the empirical literature. This experience was communicated to the IWG\_OSO by the UK NCA based on their substantial increase in arrest and prosecution rates in the UK. According to their experiences, more repeat offenders are coming into view and, relatedly, the NCA is concerned that pathways to online CSEM offence-escalation cycles are becoming more rapid than ever before.

There is significant on-going activity by law enforcement to better understand pathways into offending and the levels of recidivism.

A key issue in investigating and prosecuting CSEM offences is that of case prioritisation and resource deployment. Some investigation prioritisation tools exist, such as the Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tools (KIRAT; Long et al., 2013). An important element of risk appraisal in case prioritisation is understanding whether an individual has previously committed the same or similar offence. Until recently, given the low recidivism rates for CSEM offending indicated in the literature, it was considered that many CSEM users were previously unknown to the police. However, increased operational activity suggests that this situation may be changing, which in turn may create opportunities for developing and improving CSEM offender risk assessment and case prioritisation procedures.

Participants theorised that, overall, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) could be expanded to include prevention as well as prosecution. There was, however, also an understandable caution amongst police respondents that these roles could sometimes conflict. Another challenge to law enforcement is the feasibility of being able to keep up with the changing rates of technology and new platforms that have proliferated in our society (Lareki et al., 2017). The availability of new technology has made it easier than ever for sex offenders to target children for sexual exploitation and for indecent images of children to be shared by sex offenders in an online environment (McCartan, 2014).

This has also led to a reduced risk of prosecution where it is possible to acquire illegal material from websites, emails and apps where it cannot be intercepted (Holt et al., 2010).

Indeed, in recent court proceedings, sex offenders have been banned from using such apps as they do not retain internet history and specialist forensic software would be needed to trace the history on the app (The Telegraph, 2017).

Survey participants believed that prioritising policing resources, such as specialist staff investigating and monitoring online CSEM, the use of multidisciplinary teams, and victim-centred policing focusing on preventing new victims, would be useful; as too would better co-ordination and shared knowledge between investigators internationally.



Extend innovative methods, such as informal home visits by police or health care professionals

When participants were asked whether legal sanctions should mainly be utilised for those offenders who manufacture and distribute CSEM, with treatment being provided for viewers of CSEM, the main finding was reflected in comments such as:

*“I think all of those are offences, so all these actions should be punished. Viewing CSEM increases the market and violates the victim shown in the material. However, I think that the production and distribution of CSEM should be punished more severely than the viewing”.*

However, these scenarios can be muddled, where, for example, the subject is a minor and might have produced and distributed due to a request/coercion/exploitation. Participants suggested each case should be assessed on an individual level, with risk assessments drawing from evidence-based research

# Needs

Quite apart from these issues, the participants identified a series of areas for further development, which could be advanced with law enforcement for more effective management and prevention of online child sexual offending behaviour, particularly the need to:

## Create consistency

International police forces should be better resourced to deal consistently with case information in order to enable effective victim-centric prosecution internationally (cited examples of good practice in this regard include Project Vic ([www.projectvic.org/](http://www.projectvic.org/))).

## Target interventions

Develop innovative police intervention methods with online child sex offenders, such as warning letters or informal home visits, either for prevention or prosecution purposes.

## Reduce the availability of CSEM online

Whilst there is evidence of good practice in the management and prevention of online sexual offending thus far, there still remains a need to promote efforts to share and block CSEM (e.g. sharing known and first-generation image information with online service providers such as ISPs to allow for pre-screening, filtering and blocking).

## Integrate image databases

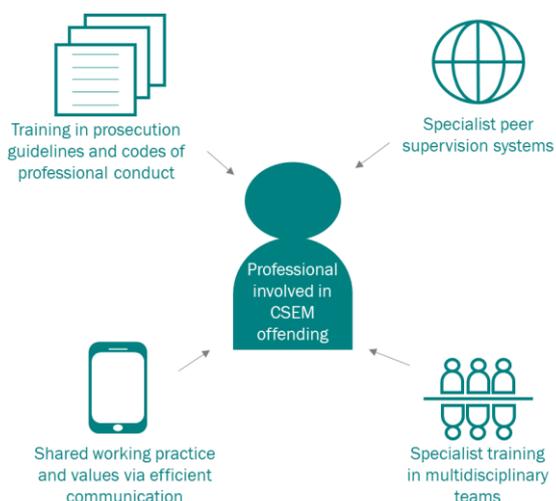
Link and integrate the Interpol International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database with other image databases and unconnected jurisdictions to aid victim identification and offender prosecution internationally.

## Treatment developments

Despite recent law enforcement experiences, empirical data suggests that CSEM reoffending risk is low, with studies reporting less than 5% of reconviction over four years, and even fewer ‘crossovers’ into contact offending (Faust et al., 2015; Seto, Hanson, & Babchishin, 2011). Hence, in the absence of firm evidence that recidivism rates may be higher than previously thought, it is considered that treatments designed for contact offending can be irrelevant or counterproductive for CSEM offenders, whilst briefer, more targeted interventions may be more appropriate.

Participants highlighted the need to develop better methods for identifying CSEM offenders who are also involved or are likely to crossover to contact offending. Merdian et al. (2018) identified features differentiating ‘fantasy-driven’ and ‘contact-driven’ online offenders, and the meta-analysis of Babchishin et al. (2014) highlighted key situational and psychological variables likely to be associated with offence escalation. The need for specialised risk assessment tools requires the research community to:

- i. Explore risk factors and unique expected recidivism rates for different types of CSEM offending;
- ii. Conduct long-term follow-up studies;
- iii. Consider how to incorporate legal pornography usage and addiction processes in risk assessment.



## Prevention of sexual harm

There is a recognition that detected and convicted offenders are only “the tip of the iceberg” (Beier et al., 2009). Due to the epidemic of CSEM offenders and sometimes limited law enforcement capacity, it is important to focus on primary prevention as well as offender treatment and management.

Prevention of sexual abuse is tied into public health concepts of **primary** (broad-based public messaging), **secondary** (working with at-risk populations), **tertiary** (treatment/management) and **quaternary** prevention (safeguarding from excessive intervention) (McCartan & Brown, 2019; McCartan et al., 2018).

In some jurisdictions, formal measures for the prevention of sexual harm are set in place to manage reoffending risk with CSEM-only offenders; for example, the use of Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, and Sexual Risk Orders (SRO) in the UK.

However, participants mentioned the need for a balance between punitive measures and therapeutic responses, with a more holistic, quaternary-based approach:

*“There are cases, from a forensic examination point of view, where you can see a progression and a shift in interest and you can see where that interest sort of establishes and I think if that’s caught early enough, and certainly with younger offenders, I think it would be our view that we would generally favour a therapeutic response, especially with young offenders, than a punitive one, simply because there is an opportunity to hopefully alter the course of their movement” (Tyrell, 2016, p.15).*

Another participant reported that in Ireland, there are non-governmental organisations and private companies which give talks in schools as a preventative measure, but they feel there is a lack of government support for such initiatives.

## Primary prevention

Participants also discussed the potential benefits of educational initiatives as a means of good preventative practice. This follows reports that children are increasingly active online from an early age, with more and more children going online, spending longer online, and having their own social media account (Ofcom, 2018). This approach is consistent with international best practice in child sexual abuse and exploitation intervention approaches, as established under the Societal, Industry and Media and Communications Capabilities led under the MNR.

### Classroom-based education programmes

Classroom-based education programmes could highlight the dangers of the internet in e-safety classes focusing on sexual content (Pedersen, 2013). Whilst this already happens in many places, the content and method of delivery is not consistently well validated, evaluated or standardised. In view of youth involved CSEM issues in schools and associated abuse, it has been argued that such messaging needs to integrate meaningfully with the sex and relationships education programme, beginning in young childhood and continuing into adolescence (Phippen, 2016).

### Thinkuknow

With children increasingly vulnerable to online CSE/A, the NCA's *Thinkuknow* programme looks to target children with clear, age appropriate educative resources as a means of educating them about online risks. The programme also provides information to parents and carers. Most recently, the programme has launched *Jessie & Friends*, a three-episode series of animations, used as a means of enabling children to understand safe scenarios so they can understand unhealthy behaviours.

### ISP and ESP support

Support is also needed from ISPs and Electronic Service Providers (ESPs), both in reducing access to CSEM and in increasing parental responsibility and guardianship online; but this needs to be coordinated with governmental channels. Therefore, international collaboration and co-operation at all levels is key for more effective prevention. The new regulatory framework, proposed by the UK government in the *Online Harms White Paper*, offers a feasible mechanism for government regulation of abusive and exploitative content and activity on online platforms and services, one which could be explicitly integrated with a primary prevention agenda.

### Training

Participants also suggested that training, where appropriate, be designed and delivered by youth for youth. This would, however, be dependent on several factors, such as the relevant children's ages, the context of delivery, and thematic focus of the education (e.g. the risks that could arise from the disclosure of sexual abuse by a minor to a minor). The UK's NCA runs an Ambassador course that aims to upskills a workforce on how to protect young people online, with the Thinkuknow training programme trickling down to other professionals.



## Secondary prevention

Secondary prevention measures contribute to the protection and safeguarding of children from sexual victimisation by targeting those at risk of engaging in offending behaviour. Currently, however, comparatively few such approaches exist.

Participants across the Delphi survey agreed that the prevention debate has to shift from a focus on post-offending arrest to earlier interventions that focus on identifying and working with undetected CSEM users to initially steer them towards self-management. Here, participants suggested provision of support services for undetected or self-referred individuals. Public information films could target to reduce stigma and thereby increase access to support services. Participants also argued that public awareness campaigns could drive CSEM activity further underground and even draw attention to a vulnerable population that could be exploited.

It was also considered important that professional engagement with the media should increase, to provide information on the nature of CSEM offending and to seek to minimise inflammatory language. Participants agreed the best way to educate and prevent is to raise public awareness of the topic (e.g., through integration of storylines in soap operas), with media platforms being used to educate the public for prevention purposes, which could then be embedded into education programmes through schools and universities.

### Splash pages

Splash pages are pages or images which appear on the user's screen whilst a webpage is preparing to open, often used as deterrence schemes to prevent individuals from intentionally or accidentally accessing CSEM material online (ECPAT International, 2017). Many countries (e.g. Norway) use splash pages in combination with IWOL. In this way, prospective viewers of imagery hosted on IWOL domains are instead presented with deterrent messaging, and information about relevant police and support organisations, where appropriate.

## Anonymous helplines

Anonymous helplines have been introduced in some countries, such as Stop it Now! Helplines in the UK and the Netherlands. These services provide a free, professional, anonymous helpline to offer information and guidance to anyone concerned about sexual abuse. Help is offered in two phases:

- i. Via information and guidance, such as advice in understanding the offending behaviour and implementing protective actions;
- ii. Via short-term targeted support, especially in particularly complex cases, through call-backs or face-to-face treatment sessions by professionals.

Pilot studies into the limitations and benefits of a free confidential helpline service in the UK found that these helplines contributed directly to preventing CSEM reoffending by modifying users' actions (Van Horn et al., 2015).

## Tertiary prevention

Tertiary prevention refers to interventions targeted at identified offenders, including arrest and prosecution and treatment provisions. These have traditionally comprised of individual psychological therapy, group-based therapies, social interventions, and psycho-pharmacological interventions. Such measures also include guidance on employment, re-access to children, and desistance behaviour.

Delphi participants argued that targeted and proportionate interventions should be developed. Currently, even though there is a plethora of different types of intervention, both court-ordered and voluntary, there is very little research on treatment programmes and risk assessments tailored to CSEM users (Seto & Ahmed, 2014; Perkins et al., 2018), and so further research is required on CSEM-exclusive offending populations to inform the development of tertiary intervention measures, particularly specialised risk assessment tools.

# Barriers to change

## Lack of understanding of online sex offending in the wider public

Participants in the Delphi survey agreed that the most important barrier to making resources more accessible for current or potential victims/offenders is a lack of understanding in the wider public and at governmental level, and therefore further education and awareness raising concerning CSEM offending and victimisation is needed.

The absence of this promotes a level ill-informed public opinion, negative media coverage, irrational stigmatisation and a lack of political willingness to take necessary actions to bring about the changes that are needed. Stigma about having sexual problems also plays a part in introducing educational programmes into schools, although this depends on how information is presented. For example, schools are generally willing to engage in education around sexting (Phippen, 2016).

## Too much reluctance

Participants argued that lack of funding and political drive, and parents' reluctance around their children receiving fuller sexual, social and internet education is a significant barrier to change.

A report by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (2016) described many young people across the world feeling that current sex education is "too little, too late, and too biological" (p.9). The English government has now announced compulsory relationships and sex education in schools from 2020, with attention to the importance of education in relation to online relationships, as described in the recent draft statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (Department for Education, 2019).

## Funding challenges

Participants across consensus groups noted that there is already a huge demand on governmental funding for other psychological and forensic/legal areas, and therefore funding for prevention services for both CSEM victims and offenders can be limited.

There was a perception that governmental funding often prioritises tertiary prevention (such as programmes to detect and catalogue CSEM) rather than programmes to prevent CSEM offending. Some participants also argued that it is easier for victims to receive funding than offenders, particularly due to undifferentiated public perceptions of sex offenders and the priority given to punishment. More nuanced public education interventions would help to address these barriers to allow for more effective and comprehensive prevention and harm reduction. Notwithstanding this barrier, it was reported that, with the advent of intergovernmental programmes to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g., WeProtect), some governments (e.g., the UK) have developed national prevention strategies, and have made available bespoke prevention-focused funding streams to statutory and non-statutory organisations, as well as to associated research and development initiatives.

## Lack of prevention strategies

Given the scale of CSEM offending, there was agreement amongst consultation participants that prevention should focus on primary and secondary prevention programmes (e.g. self-management strategies), and only if that fails, should criminal justice systems be engaged.

Participants also discussed the current demands already placed on the police systems and the importance of supporting the police in their work, as opposed to overwhelming them with additional tasks.

# Future directions

Following dissemination of the consultation and survey responses, major recommendations were highlighted to the IWG\_OSO, alongside potential issues in implementing and mainstreaming these recommendations for enhanced intervention.

## Offender treatment and management

Otherwise known as tertiary prevention, treatment interventions for sex offenders have traditionally comprised of individual psychological therapy, group-based therapies, social interventions, and psycho-pharmacological interventions, backed up (in the UK) with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

As the scale of CSEM offending has escalated, treatment is only a small, albeit important, part on an overall prevention strategy:

- i. Many at-risk offenders need to be managed through the criminal justice and forensic mental health systems, and so providing treatment can help reduce future reoffending risk;
- ii. By working in this way with known offenders, knowledge base about aetiology, typologies and differential risk factors can be increased.



## Risk assessment tools

Risk assessment for CSEM offenders usually involves identifying multiple risk and protective factors, which combine into an overall evaluation (Babchishin et al., 2018). Further development is required with risk assessment tools being applied to CSEM users:

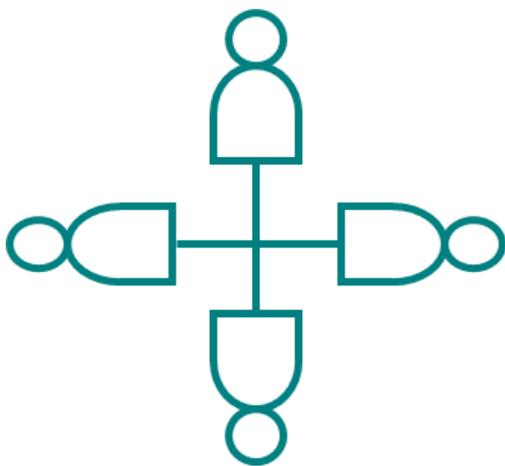
- > There is a lack of normative data and differences in recidivism rates where contact sex offender risk assessment tools are applied to CSEM users (Faust et al., 2015; Seto et al., 2012).
- > Risk scales such as the Static-99R (Helmus et al., 2012) and Risk Matrix-2000 (Thornton et al., 2013) cannot be applied to CSEM-exclusive users.
- > Some risk scales have been found to rank order CSEM offenders in terms of risk, however, the expected recidivism rates provided in the norms do not match well for CSEM offenders.
- > To date, only one specific risk assessment tool has been developed (the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT); Seto & Eke, 2015), which does not predict reoffending for these offenders.
- > Eke et al.'s (2018) updated version of CPORT now has some demonstrated predictive effectiveness.
- > There is a current lack of confidence and statistical stability in the assessment of exclusive-CSEM reoffending (Brennan et al., 2017), and so further risk assessment tools designed specifically for CSEM-exclusive offenders should be informed by research specific to online samples.

## Treatment programmes

There are also issues surrounding available treatment programmes for CSEM offending. In the UK, for example, the existing governmental intervention programme (the Internet Sex Offending Treatment Programme (i-SOTP), which has now been withdrawn and replaced, focused on established dynamic risk factors from general sex offending treatment programmes. These dynamic factors included:

- > Sexual interests (including sexual preferences for children);
- > Distorted attitudes (including sexual entitlement beliefs);
- > Socio-affective functioning (such as lack of emotional intimacy); and
- > Self-management (such as lifestyle impulsiveness).

There recent evaluation of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) core sex offender treatment programme (Core SOTP) found that CSEM offenders who participated in the treatment had higher rates of recidivism than the control group (Mews et al., 2017). It is not clear if CSEM offender treatments currently map onto the specific risks and needs of this offender group, and if so whether they are linked to behaviour changes.



Therefore, if CSEM offenders are at a demonstrably low recidivism or escalation risk, perhaps no treatment should be offered for these types of offenders.

Data from Contact Sex Offenders (CSOs) have suggested that treatment can increase the risk of reoffending for low-risk offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), and given their risks and needs, it is doubtful that a lengthy treatment programme for CSEM offenders would be justified. Some participants have the impression that the arrest and intervention by police may be 'traumatising enough' for some offenders that they may not reoffend. It is important to help former offenders to lead happy, fulfilling lives in support of this objective.

It is also important that treatment interventions (secondary and tertiary) target the range of presentations within CSEM offending in an evidence-based and proportionate way. Although knowledge of CSEM users has increased, there are many issues which need to be addressed in relation to the treatment of CSEM offending, such as how to adapt interventions for sub-groups of offenders in different contexts and delivering interventions that are proportionate to offenders' risks and needs.

Treatment of CSEM offenders will be dependent on multiple factors such as the problems from which the offence-related behaviour arises and what type of treatment is more appropriate with the appropriate treatment targets. It may be the case that different interventions should be developed for the different subtypes of offending.

The former National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in the UK, now HMPSS, acknowledges the role of neurobiological factors in sexual interest, the possible permanence of established sexual interests, and a greater focus on how CSEM users can learn to manage their arousal and negative emotions.

## Prevention

A significant number of CSEM users currently remain unknown to the judicial system and have no contact with preventative services (Beier et al., 2015).

Current research suggests that some CSEM users wish to access support for their behaviour but fear the legal consequences of their disclosure (Meridian, Perkins, Dustagheer & Glorney, 2017). Therefore, interventions for CSEM users could target both potential and known offenders who may be motivated to change their sexual behaviour without the fear of being arrested if they come forward.

Splash pages are one such method. Wright (2010) demonstrated that messages indicating that the offender may be apprehended for their online CSEM use were effective in deterring users from accessing this content. However, for long-term changes in behaviour, CSEM users should also be offered help to desist. Although research to date has demonstrated that the employment of technical controls to filter and block child sexual abuse material queries by Microsoft and Google reduced searches of this nature by 67% (Steel, 2015), it is not clear as to the extent to which splash pages contribute to the reduction of these searches (ECPAT International, 2017).

There are also issues surrounding the timing of the preventative support CSEM users receive. In most countries, the offender only receives support once convicted of a CSEM offence, such as risk assessments, access to treatment and case support, monitoring software, and access to other services. Therefore, participants argued that (potential) offenders should receive support through secondary prevention, with primary prevention being the ultimate goal. Some examples of current practice have been identified that could be adapted to other jurisdictions:

## Prevention Project Dunkelfeld (PPD)

PPD was introduced in 2005 with the aim of preventing sexual offences against children by allowing self-identified offenders unknown to the justice system to seek professional help and engage in therapy (Beier et al., 2015). In the three years following the launch of the project, results showed that a notable proportion of men admitted to being attracted to children and contacted services after watching its media campaign ( $n = 808$ ), with 45% of these individuals travelling to the clinic for a full assessment (Beier et al., 2009).

This demonstrates that within a treatment programme which allowed CSEM users to communicate with experts in assessment and therapy, and within confidentiality guidelines, such men are amenable and willing to participate in the project and implies that a preventative treatment effort for potential offenders is feasible.

These early intervention programmes share the philosophy that sexual interest is (partly) biologically driven, and that as such, individuals need to learn to manage their offence-related arousal, together with managing potential offence-triggering factors, such as negative emotional states, which would enable them to take responsibility for future behaviours.

PPD also educated the public and potential offenders, such as the stigma offenders face, via its public educational approaches, namely Prevention Network (<http://www.dont-offend.org>), which created a video for German citizens with messages to the effect that some CSEM offenders are not responsible for their sexual preferences. The video also advertises a free and confidential helpline for potential or unknown offenders to contact for support.

## Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF)

In the UK, the psycho-educational programme, InformPlus, is provided by an independent charity, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, and is open to anyone at any stage in the judicial system who admits accessing CSEM. InformPlus provides information to aid the individual's understanding of their CSEM offending, to encourage them to explore their own involvement in CSEM, and to consider practical and realistic methods of self-management/control.

InformPlus then focuses on helping CSEM users take responsibility for their future behaviour, and as part of this, offers mindfulness therapy to increase emotional coping skills (Gillespie et al., 2015). Participants in our consultation reported that there is a suggested heightened risk of suicide amongst men arrested for CSEM offending, and that the InformPlus programme also acts as a preventative measure against this outcome.

LFF has also created short public information films as part of its CSEM deterrence campaign. They focus on different aspects of offending, from the risk of being caught to wider implications for victims, offenders, and their families. They lead viewers to LFF's 'Stop it Now!' Helpline and 'Get Help' website, to which, according to LFF, have been over 90.000 visitors since 2016. These are all offered as part of a range of intervention methods to reach offenders and potential offenders.



## Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

CoSA provide support to local volunteers in communities to work with medium and high-risk sex offenders to minimise alienation, support reintegration, prevent sexual reoffending, and provide safer communities. Since 2018, the Circles Europe Association was founded to promote the implementation of CoSAs across Europe. A systematic review conducted by Clarke, Brown and Völlm (2015) suggested that participation in CoSA was associated with lower recidivism, although few studies examined changes in risk or psychosocial outcomes. Therefore, they recommend that longer term and prospective follow-up studies with control groups should be conducted in the future. However, these studies focus on sex offending generally and do not focus exclusively on CSEM groups.

## Police2Peer

Police2Peer is a European prevention initiative, wherein European police target CSEM users on networks associated with large-scale CSEM distribution. Participating law enforcement make files that appear to be illegal material available to a prospective user, with the appearance of coming from another person with a similar sexual interest in children. Once the would-be CSEM user begins to download what appears to be an abuse file or begins to make their illegal files available on the network, they may receive a 'warning file' from law enforcement. These files inform the would-be user of the risks they are taking, and signpost to help and support resources at Helplinks.eu (Europol, 2019).

Law enforcement participants in the Police2Peer initiative have reported a 28% reduction in the number of IP addresses in possession of, sharing and downloading real CSEM in its two years of operation. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of internet providers are no longer providing access to such files on a monthly basis.

The image on the left depicts the locations where prospective users have been engaged by the Police2Peer operation. Each dot represents anything from one to hundreds of IP-addresses.

## **Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT)**

A risk assessment tool designed to predict any sexual recidivism among adult male offenders with a conviction for a CSEM offence.

## **Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP)**

Intended to reduce sexual reoffending via the identifying and addressing of known criminogenic needs.

## **Desistance**

The process of resisting criminal activity in those with a criminogenic profile.

## **International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database**

Managed by Interpol, it uses image and video comparison software to make connections between victims, abusers, and locations.

## **Internet Service Provider (ISP)**

An organisation that provides services for accessing, using, or participating in the Internet.

## **Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT)**

A risk prioritisation tool that applies to individuals suspected of possessing, making, taking and/or distributing CSEM.

## **MAPPA**

UK procedures for monitoring sexual and violent offenders in the community.

## **Primary prevention**

Broad based societal approaches to understand sexual harm and its prevention.

## **Recidivism**

Future reoffending by an offender, usually measured in terms of reconviction rates.

## **Risk assessment**

The methods and procedures by which a judgement is formed about the likely extent of the negative outcomes of a course of action.

## **Risk management**

The procedures and practices employed to limit or prevent the risk materialising that has been perceived to be posed by an offender or client.

## **Secondary prevention**

Working with populations at risk of committing sexual harm to stop them from offending.

## **Tertiary prevention**

A long-term response following sexual offending to minimise the likelihood of reoffending (i.e., treatment).

## **Quaternary prevention**

The set of activities to mitigate or avoid the consequences of unnecessary or excessive interventions.



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