research
in practice

Frontline
Briefing

Online child abuse

- recognition and response

Dartington

www.rip.org.uk

Introduction

Whilst many adults did not grow up in a digital world, children and young people are avid consumers of the internet and all it has to offer. Digital technology and the internet are integral to children and young people's lives and they do not conceive the online and offline world as separate spaces in the way pre-digital adults do.

The internet can be a positive space in which to play, learn and interact. However, without the right safeguards in place experiences can be punctuated by negative encounters, the impact of which may be life-altering.

Online, or technology-assisted, abuse is any form of abuse that occurs via the web, whether through social networking, games or using a mobile phone. This introductory level briefing will look at:

- some of the forms online abuse may take
- grooming and relevant legislation
- potential channels of abuse, including live streaming and gaming
- the impacts online abuse may have on children and young people.

Children online

Children are some of the most prolific consumers of online content, apps and social networking sites. For those with access at home, the internet allows interaction with friends and family and access to games at little or no cost. The fact they don't need credit to connect online creates an equalising effect for many (The Children's Society, 2017), though more than a third of the poorest children do not have the internet at home (**www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20899109**).

Ofcom estimates that children and young people spend an average of 15 hours online per week, many spending more time online than watching TV.

23 per cent of children aged 8 to 11 and 72 percent of children aged 12 to 15 have a social media profile, and 56 per cent of children aged 8 to 11 and 58 per cent of children aged 12 to 15 play games online (Ofcom, 2016).

What are the risks?

- Children may use the internet as a space in which to test boundaries and take risks. Like adults, their inhibitions may be reduced by the anonymous, distant feel of the internet.
- Children may use the internet to seek social interaction they are not able to achieve offline and people they meet online can become 'friends' despite never having met them.
- The anonymity of the internet allows people to hide their true identities.
- Smart technology exposes children to material they would not be able to access offline, such as pornography. The impact of viewing pornography online is still under exploration. However, it is suggested that it may be damaging to children's understandings of sexual relationships as well as their emotional development, and that there may be a correlation between exposure to pornography and aggressive behaviour in children (Stanley et al, 2016).

Children in care are particularly vulnerable to a number of risks online and foster carers need safeguarding training and digital literacy skills to manage the internet environment in their homes. Guardian Saints (2017) recently published the results of an online survey conducted during 2016 with over 300 foster carers, gathering information on key issues and concerns in relation to online safety:

- 64 per cent of looked-after young people have smartphones, and most have at least one other device such as a laptop or tablet.
- Many foster carers are over the age of 50 and are less confident using technology than the children they look after, particularly around using parental controls. Carers identified particular challenges with mobile phones and issues of secrecy and commented on difficulties with trying to apply controls for mobile devices, especially if the device was supplied by the birth parent, making the inbuilt parental controls settings inaccessible.
- The responses indicate that 56 per cent of children and young people in care have been exposed to further risk of harm resulting from use of the Internet. Social media sites have been cited as the main conduits. Of that 56 per cent, the issues experienced include:
  - cyberbullying (21 per cent)
  - unplanned contact with birth parents (20 per cent)
  - access to inappropriate sites (17 per cent)
  - 'sexting' (17 per cent)
  - internet addiction (11 per cent)
  - grooming (12 per cent)
  - radicalisation (2 per cent).
- Location services built into many apps and sites should be carefully monitored by carers, as the exact location of a child in school or in a foster home can be accessed through these means.
- It is promising that 74 per cent of foster carer respondents said they had conversations with the children in their care about appropriate internet use.

(Pavlick, 2017; Guardian Saints, 2017)

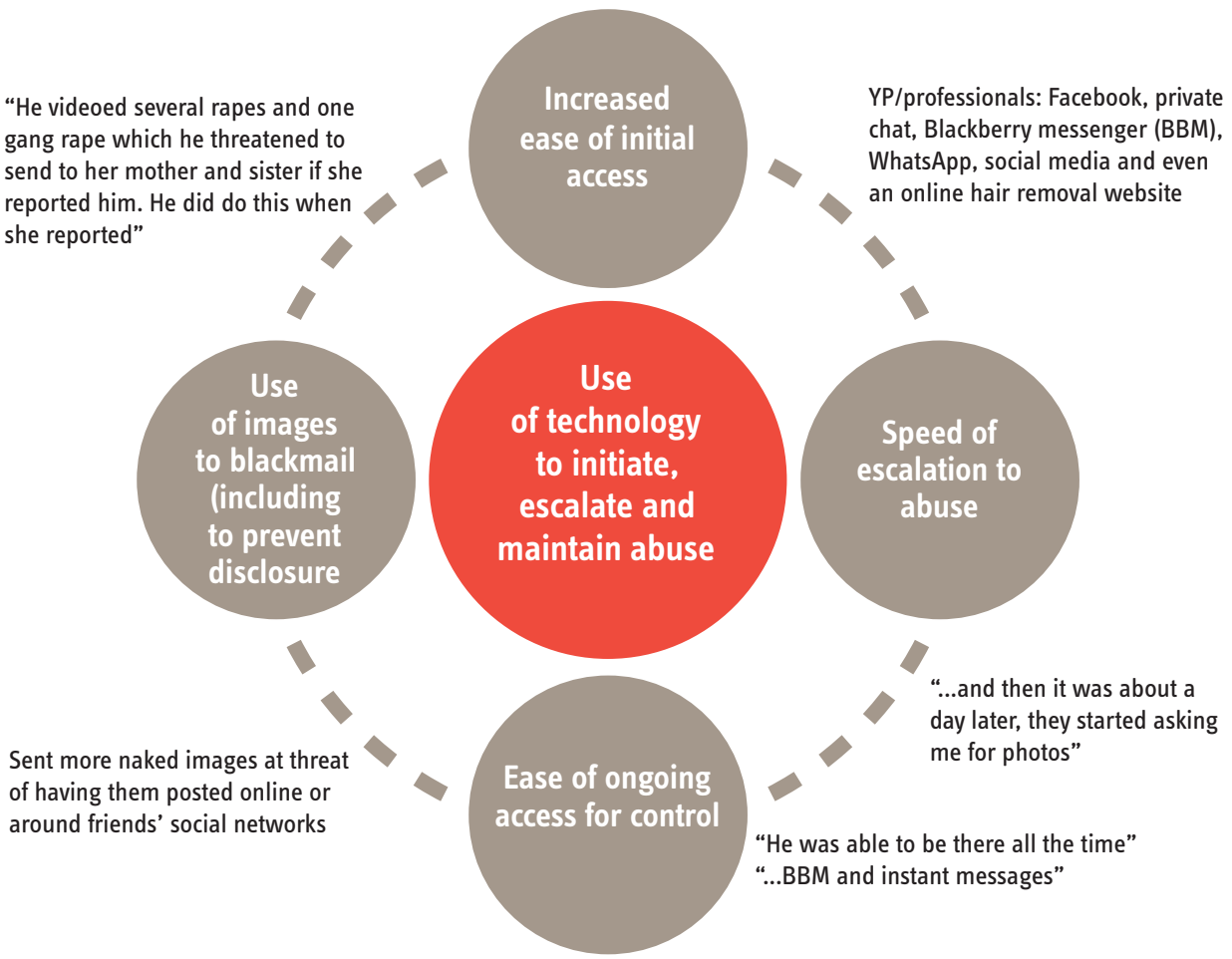
As technology and its accessibility develops, the risks - and benefits - will continue to evolve. In order to safeguard children it is important to understand the forms online abuse can take and the forums through which it may occur.

Online abuse

An NSPCC 2016 Freedom of Information request to police forces across England and Wales identified that 5,653 child sex offences that involved the internet had been recorded in 2016/17 (NSPCC, 2017). There will be many more online experiences that are never reported to the police. Adults who view online and offline worlds as separate entities may struggle to apply the same offline concepts to online behaviour and may not appreciate the impact that online abuse can have on children and young people.

For child sex offenders, O'Connell (2003) suggested that the internet has increased accessibility, vulnerability and opportunity. The diagram below highlights some of the ways in which technology can assist the initiation, escalation and maintenance of abuse (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Online abuse has added complexities: Role of technology in abuse



Ways in which technology can assist the initiation, escalation and maintenance of abuse (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017)

Some forms of online abuse

Grooming

> *I was being groomed online by men and it went on for years. Then people started finding out and getting involved. They didn't know the full extent, but I spoke to the police.*
>
> *When they questioned me I felt so ashamed so I didn't tell them the full story. I feel like such a coward. I tried to kill myself recently because it's constantly on my mind.*
>
> Girl, aged between 12 and 15 (Childline, 2016)

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, radicalisation or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know, who may be male or female and may be any age.

Experiences of prior trauma, instability of family life, age and gender may indicate an increased risk of experiencing grooming and exploitation (Whittle et al, 2013), but no one factor is likely to explain why grooming might occur and any child may be susceptible. Since grooming is a covert activity it can be a difficult process to identify until a point where some notable boundary has been crossed.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse. The nature of the process means that many young people believe that they are in a relationship with the offender and will therefore not seek help (NSPCC, 2016). Young people who did contact Childline often say they felt too ashamed and embarrassed to share what had happened and at fault for initiating or maintaining contact with an individual. Many also disclosed that they were afraid to speak out about their experiences because of threats of violence or because they had been told they wouldn't be believed if they did tell someone.

Whittle et al's (2013) synthesis of evidence from a range of studies showed online sex offenders varied widely in their grooming processes and techniques, had different goals (contact-driven or fantasy-driven offending) and that 77 per cent of sex offenders used a range of simultaneous communication methods to manipulate their victims, such as email, text, social media and phone calls (Eaton and Holmes, 2017).

The use of online exploitation and grooming is common in numerous CSE cases (Palmer, 2015, cited in Eaton and Holmes, 2017). CSE can take place either online or offline, or both. Sex offenders can also groom and exploit exclusively online without any intention of ever meeting the child.

The Research in Practice Evidence Scope *Working effectively to address child sexual exploitation* (Eaton and Holmes, 2017) contains a good deal of useful information on grooming in the context of CSE.

Grooming between peers: There may be complex intersections between grooming, a controlling intimate peer-to-peer relationship and CSE by a peer. Given the ubiquity of communication through mobile phones or social networking, there will almost always be an online aspect to coercive or controlling peer relationships.

Grooming by a known person: This may be an adult or an older peer who develops a trusting friendship with a young person. The point where behaviour transgresses into illegality is when it becomes clear there is an underlying motivation to exploit the child. These perpetrators will involve themselves in children's activities and may form friendships with parents and carers to gain access to children. Children who contacted Childline to discuss their relationship with an adult or an older peer often describe their groomer as attentive, sympathetic and appearing to really care for them (NSPCC, 2016).

Grooming by a stranger: Groomers are able to adopt a scatter-gun approach online, contacting multiple children simultaneously without leaving their homes, increasing the chance that at least one will be receptive. Adults who have a sexual interest in children capitalise on the anonymity of the internet, using false profiles to deceive children as to who they really are. Online grooming should not necessarily be seen as a precursor to contact offences.

Online sexual grooming and the law

As a result of the NSPCC's 'flaw in the law' campaign it is now a criminal offence in England and Wales for an adult to send a sexual message to a child. The law was amended in April 2017 and the new offence criminalises conduct where an adult intentionally communicates with a child for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification (s.67 *Serious Crime Act 2015* inserts a new section 15A into the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*).

The offence of grooming is a separate offence, the legal definition: 'an adult must have communicated with a child under 16 on one or more occasions and either met or arranged to meet with the intention of committing a sexual offence' (s.15 *Sexual Offences Act 2003*). All these elements need to be proven in order for the offence to be proven. An offence of 'grooming' would, therefore, not be proven unless there had been a request to meet.

It is important to note that neither of these offences apply to a child over 16, so those aged 16 and 17 who are still at risk of grooming are not offered the same protections under law.

It is also important to remember that when the child knows the perpetrator, it is often the case that their family does as well. This perpetrator may apply the same grooming methods to the family members so that, when their sexual motivations are identified, parents and carers can feel shock and disbelief but also feelings of blame, or of failing their child; therefore they may need support as well.

Exploitation and self-generated indecent images

> *I met this guy on my social network and he was really nice at first, telling me that he loved me and paying me all these compliments. I sent him some naked pictures and now he is threatening me, saying that he is going to show them to my friends and family if I don't send him more. I have also found out that he lied about his age and he is much older than he said he was. I don't know what to do and I'm too embarrassed to talk to anyone.*
>
> Girl aged between 12 and 15
> (Childline, 2016)

There are many routes that can lead to the creation of self-generated indecent images (which includes either pictures or video images). Children or teenagers may be coerced or pressured into sending an image; they may also share naked, semi-naked or sexual images of themselves voluntarily, for instance, with someone with whom they believe they are in a relationship. Either way the production, consumption or circulation of such material is a criminal offence.

Recent research carried out on behalf of the NSPCC and the Office of the Children's Commissioner reported that 14 per cent of the 11-16 year olds consulted had generated a naked or semi-naked image of themselves (Martellozzo et al, 2017). More than half of this sub-sample had shared this image with someone else, with a third of these sending it to someone they did not know. A fifth of young people who reported creating naked or semi-naked images of themselves said they had not wanted to do so. This suggests some form of pressure or coercion.

Once published, online images can be replicated and circulated at an alarmingly fast rate. A study for the Internet Watch Foundation (Smith, 2012) found that 88 per cent of the self-generated, sexually explicit online images and videos of young people that analysts encountered had been taken from their original location and uploaded and made public on 'parasite websites'. In less than 48 working hours, IWF analysts encountered more than 12,000 such images and videos spread over 68 websites.

What you need to know

Child sexual images have the potential to remain online indefinitely, exposing the victim to repeat re-victimisation each time the image is accessed. They can be shared among paedophile networks, used to blackmail, groom, exploit, harass, bully and humiliate and to encourage the exploitation and abuse of others. The knowledge that their image can be repeatedly viewed and may never be removed contributes to the ongoing trauma victims face (CEOP, 2012).

Empowering children and teenagers to report and remove self-generated indecent images as efficiently and effectively as possible denies an offender their hold over the young person and/or prevents bullying by peers. Childline, the National Crime Agency - Child Exploitation and Online Protection (NCA-CEOP) and the IWF have processes in place that allow for this to happen anonymously, reducing the fear that parents, carers and law enforcement must be told and allowing the young person the opportunity to remove their images. These agencies are currently working together in this 'Report Remove' process, finding solutions for age verification concerns, making this process more expeditious and efficient. The links are:

- **www.childline.org.uk/remove**
- **www.thinkuknow.co.uk**
- **www.iwf.org.uk**

Whether they are taken freely or by coercion, whether they are shared whilst in a relationship, as a joke or maliciously, the creation, possession and distribution of indecent images of children is a criminal offence (Possessing Indecent Photographs, S160 *Criminal Justice Act 1988* and Taking, Distributing or Showing indecent Photographs, S1(1) *Protection of Children Act 1978* as amended by the *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994*). This applies to all children under the age of 18. This can often cause confusion for children and adults alike as the sexual age of consent is 16, so it is an important fact to be aware of.

Every crime reported to the police must have an outcome code. In 2016 a new code (Outcome 21) was agreed in relation to youth-produced sexual imagery to prevent children from being criminalised in these situations (see the accompanying tips and links for further information - see **www.rip.org.uk/online-abuse**).

Cyberbullying

Everyone seems to be turning against me. Whenever I look at my messages there's something horrible about the way I look or about my personality. I've thought about ending my life because it gets me so down.

ChildLine caller

Cyberbullying can be defined as bullying that is carried out via electronic means (Wolke, Lee and Guy, 2017). It exhibits the same characteristics as other forms of bullying but online it can be conducted by anyone, known or stranger, and at any time, day or night, in any location. In this way it can feel inescapable to the victim.

A review of 35 international studies concluded that around 24 per cent of children and young people will experience some form of cyberbullying, and 17 per cent will take part in cyberbullying others. Other research has suggested the figures might be lower, but the host of available data demonstrates that cyberbullying is a significant problem, with the potential to have a long-lasting and damaging effect on those who experience it (The Royal Foundation, 2017). As with self-generated indecent images, these abusive communications can leave permanent traces on social media and provide access and further abuse from other parties.

Potential channels for online abuse

Social media

YouTube. That's my life. Snapchat, that's my life too, sometimes Skype.

I had to leave (my friends) at that school but we are still friends like, we write on Facebook and stuff.

(The Children's Society, 2017)

Social media can be defined as 'forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social-networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content' (Frith, 2017). These are an integral part of children and young people's lives, with 94.8 per cent of 15-year-olds using social media before or after school in 2015 (Frith, 2017); instant messaging being the most widely used form of communication.

The conventions of online social interaction appear to exploit responses that are particularly sensitive in teenagers' developing brains. Findings from a small US study (Sherman et al, 2016) in which researchers scanned teenagers' brains while they used social media showed that 'the same brain circuits that are activated by eating chocolate and winning money are activated when teenagers see large numbers of 'likes' on their own photos or the photos of peers in a social network.'

In deciding whether to like a photo, the teenagers were highly influenced by the number of likes the photo had. 'We showed the exact same photo with a lot of likes to half of the teens and to the other half with just a few likes,' Sherman said. 'When they saw a photo with more likes, they were significantly more likely to like it themselves. Teens react differently to information when they believe it has been endorsed by many or few of their peers, even if these peers are strangers' (www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/social-media-likes-impact-teens-brains-and-behavior.html).

Posting pictures to receive likes is a form of validation seeking that can lead to anxiety (Papadopoulos, 2017). Children may share too much and there can also be a negative effect on self-esteem – a 'compare and despair attitude' (Royal Society for Public Health, 2017) caused by others' posts and comparisons to their own.

This aspect of social media can have a significant negative impact on children, both emotionally and psychologically. Moreover, children and young people using social media can also be abused, exploited and groomed (either wittingly or unwittingly) when they upload photos or live stream, for example.

Simply restricting access to social media may actually inhibit a child from learning to recognise risks and being able to respond appropriately. Adults may be lulled into a false sense of security by setting parental restrictions that are easily circumvented by children who know more about how to use the technology than they do (Frith, 2017).

Regular conversations about internet usage, favourite apps and social networking sites will help adults develop a better understanding of a child's online life, while also giving children the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

Live streaming

> *I like live streaming because I like showing my friends and family what I'm doing throughout the day, and so I can connect with them on a daily basis.*
>
> (Childnet, 2017)

Children are prolific users of online streaming. Childnet surveyed 500 children and young people aged between 8 and 17 and established over one in ten young people have 'gone live', with 44 per cent using YouTube Live as the facilitator (Childnet, 2017). Children need to consider who, what and why they are streaming. What might be an innocent interaction could quickly become something more but, once conducted, it is difficult to then take back.

Live streaming allows real-time access to behaviours in which those being filmed may not have time to think through the consequences of their actions being broadcast. Neither the person streaming nor site moderators can predict how people will respond or prevent inappropriate content being shown. Viewers can feel a sense of responsibility when watching events unfold live, even when they are unable to intervene in any way.

A more sinister aspect is the live streaming of child sexual abuse. Encryption platforms limit service providers' ability to safeguard children, access unlawful content or work with law enforcement to prevent the abuse. Europol reports there is 'evidence that supports the link between the live streaming of child sexual abuse and subsequent travelling for the purpose of child sexual exploitation' (Wainwright and Europol, 2016).

Gaming

> *I was playing a game online and started talking to someone who asked me to send them rude pictures. They said they were my age and after talking for a while I sent them some pictures, but now they're blackmailing me and threatening to show everyone if I don't carry on. I feel really stupid and I'm scared about what will happen, what should I do?*
>
> Girl, aged 12 to 15
> (Childline, 2016)

> *My friends from school persuaded me to get this new free game on my tablet so I did and it turned out to be really fun. We made a clan on the site, which allows us to chat outside school. A person who we didn't know joined and we asked him nicely to leave because we only wanted friends in the clan. He started swearing and getting abusive. We ended up kicking him off the site, then he came back calling us all horrible names.*
>
> *We changed our settings but somehow he hacked in and came back to insult us one by one. We don't want to start a new clan or stop playing but we don't know how to stop him from being so abusive to us.*
>
> Gender and age unknown
> (Childline, 2017)

Games come in a variety of formats; boxed games for computers and consoles, apps on mobile phones and tablets and games that are downloadable. Games can be played individually or often with known contacts or strangers via the internet. There are apps which facilitate interaction between game users around the world, including apps which have the ability to share a user's location in real time, posing a range of safeguarding risks. These functions are not always clear during the app purchase stage.

Ofcom states that ten per cent of 8 to 11 year olds and 21 per cent of 12 to 15 year olds play games online with people they have never met before (Ofcom, 2016).

Disconcertingly, young people explained that they felt unable to tell their parents or carers when they experienced any form of abuse during gaming, for fear that they would be prevented from playing the game in future and would lose contact with their online friends.

Risks around online gaming are poorly understood by adults. Only one in five parents or carers of 5 to 15 year olds are concerned about whom their child is playing with in online games and the majority of parents or carers whose child owns a gaming console have not activated parental controls (Ofcom, 2016).

When asked why, 42 per cent said that they trust their child; 23 per cent that their child is always supervised; and 13 per cent that their child is too young for this to be a problem. Worryingly, 11 per cent said they hadn't been aware that the device could go online and 16 per cent said they either didn't know how to install parental controls or didn't know that it was possible (Ofcom, 2016). Parents and carers need to understand that many of the risks associated with social networking sites are also applicable to online games.

Impacts of online abuse

I couldn't concentrate 'cos I was thinking of all the possibilities of what could happen, like could have showed these images to people here like on the streets, who decide they want to do something to me, like actually physically and just things like that were running through my head and I couldn't think.

Boy aged 15

I just kept thinking if something could get brought up again, like on the internet... Cause anyone could have just saved it... When I'm around people, I always think are they thinking about what happened, like they might know about it... because of when it got put online.

Girl aged 18

People in school had asked me, why did you carry on with it when he gave you a choice, it wasn't like he forced you, so I'd be asking myself the same question, I did have a choice so why am I talking to the police about it?

Girl aged 17
(Childline, 2016)

As these quotes show, the psychological impact of online abuse can be far-reaching. The NSPCC recently commissioned a mixed methods study into the impact of online and offline sexual abuse upon young people and how professionals respond to it. The study sample of 30 young people who had experienced sexual abuse, while small, provides insight into the psychological effects of online abuse. The table on the next page is adapted from this study (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017) and describes the types of online abuse experienced by the young people who participated in the research.

Types of technology-assisted (TA) child sexual abuse (CSA), categorised in view of victims' experiences (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017)

Type of technology-assisted child sexual abuse	Further description and/or example
1. Offline CSA shared with and viewed by others via technology.	The abuse depicted in many child sexual abuse images, also termed indecent images of children (IIOC). For example, sexual abuse perpetrated by a victim's father shared globally via images and video with others via technology.
2. Peer CSA, committed via technology or offline, shared with others in the victim's peer group.	A young person (or persons) filming their abuse of a peer and sharing it with their friends for approval or status, or to shame (this includes male adolescents abusing female peers).
3. Offline contact CSA commissioned via technology.	For example, perpetrators using technology to direct perpetrators who are physically with the child to commit abusive acts (for example, perpetrators in the UK watching and directing live streamed sexual abuse of children by perpetrators in the Philippines).
4. Offline sexual blackmail (imagery as leverage).	A child or young person abused offline and images are used as leverage in the continuation of the abuse, for example, "If you tell, I will share this image with your friends and family."
5. Technology assisted sexual blackmail (imagery as leverage).	Sexual imagery of a child is obtained via technology and then used as leverage in sexual abuse, which may be either TA, offline or both; for example, a young person shares a sexual image with a person via technology; this person (the abuser) then threatens to share this imagery if the young person does not produce further sexual images or comply with offline abuse.
6. Technology assisted grooming.	This term can include TA sexual blackmail, but is more commonly used to describe perpetrators forging a close relationship with a victim via technology in order to gain the child's compliance in, and secrecy around, subsequent sexual abuse (for example, the perpetrator shows care and interest in a child online who subsequently 'falls in love' and consents to online and/or offline sexual activity despite the perpetrator being an adult and/or coercive and/or the child feeling uncomfortable).
7. Sexual activity bought from a young person via technology.	A child advertising sexual services online for payment (although sometimes apparently of their own volition, research indicates that many have experienced very significant prior traumas and abuse).
8. Sexual images created consensually but shared non-consensually.	This is where, for example, a young person shares images with a romantic partner, the relationship ends and those images are shared with peers by their ex-partner.

Of the 30 young people in the study:

- 43 per cent had experienced technology-assisted child sexual abuse
- approximately two in three reported having suicidal thoughts and nearly half reported wanting to kill themselves every day
- approximately four in five stated that they had self-harmed since experiencing online abuse
- two in three reported 'severe' or 'very severe' levels of anxiety
- about four in five had symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- about four in every five reported feeling 'dirty' because of the abuse and wanted to hide.

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017)

Young people found it difficult to move on due to fear that the offender possessed or had circulated images of the abuse. This led to them feeling angry, distressed, scared or distracted. They additionally expressed high levels of self-blame for their abuse online. They felt responsible for talking with an offender, sending images or videos, or for their actions within the abusive dynamic (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017). This was often heightened by the response of families, peers or practitioners.

It is unhelpful if practitioners respond by seeing the child or young person involved as a participant in the abuse, normalise the behaviour and therefore fail to take appropriate actions (Palmer, 2015). It is also unhelpful if adults do not perceive actions to be abuse if they occurred online, or see online abuse as less impactful (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Research on the impact of online abuse is still in its infancy, but clearly indicates that, no matter where the abuse might occur, the impact can be severe and long-lasting and in order to recover children will need the support of those around them.

What can you do?

Simply attempting to shut down access is unlikely to provide a sufficient safeguarding response and may lead to other harmful behaviours, increasing risk. Keeping children safe online is facilitated through understanding and communication between the adult carers and children. The earlier a conversation is had with a child or teenager about their use of the internet the better. By having regular conversations about online connectivity, trust and confidence will be developed allowing them to actively seek help and support.

The acronym **'TEAM'** - Talk, Agree, Explore, Manage – was created by O2 and the NSPCC to assist parents and carers with talking to their children, although it is equally applicable to parents, carers, grandparents and practitioners alike.

Talk to the young person about staying safe online, their use of the internet, what they use and why.
Explore their online world together.
Agree family rules that apply to all, not just the child.
Manage privacy and parental settings.

Young people offer the following advice to professionals:

1. **Provide good education on healthy relationships, abuse and consent from a young age.**
    - Some feel that this would have helped them avoid abusive relationships and situations and would possibly have prevented abuse by educating potential offenders.
2. **Ask, understand and notice.**
    - Some young people feel that abuse could be stopped and its impact addressed if professionals took the time to understand the impact of abuse better, notice signs and engage in purposeful conversations.
3. **Recognise the seriousness and existence of sexual abuse, including technology-assisted.**
    - Some young people talked about the need for a broad societal shift in the recognition of abuse and its seriousness.
4. **Increase support and make it more accessible.**
    - Young people mentioned a variety of factors that had restricted their access to therapy - including long waiting lists, child protection policies and inadequate awareness-raising.
5. **Increase sensitive and effective therapy.**
    - It is important that therapists take into account the experiences, stage of recovery and preferences of young people.
6. **Improve the approach of law enforcement.** Young people recommended that the police:
    - fully explain processes to victims
    - are friendly and reduce formalities
    - offer choice where possible
    - provide a consistent officer
    - provide regular updates.

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017)

This briefing comes with accompanying practical tips, links and contacts to support practitioners working with young people who are experiencing online abuse.

See - www.rip.org.uk/online-abuse

References

The anonymised quotes used throughout the briefing are from children and young people who have contacted Childnet, Barnado's and Childline to talk about experiences of online abuse. Quotes are created from real Childline contacts but may have been edited to remove elements that could compromise the anonymity of the callers.

Bentley H et al (2017) *How safe are our children? The most comprehensive overview of child protection in the UK 2017*. Available online: **www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2017-report.pdf**

Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOP) (2012) *A picture of abuse: A thematic assessment of the risk of contact child sexual abuse posed by those who possess indecent images of children*. London: National Crime Agency.

Childnet (2017) *Over 1 in 10 young people have 'gone live'*. London: Childnet. Available online: **www.childnet.com/blog/over-1-in-10-young-people-have-gone-live**

Eaton J and Holmes D (2017) *Working effectively to address child sexual exploitation: An evidence scope*. Dartington: Research in Practice.

Europol (2016) *IOCTA 2016. Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment*. The Hague: Europol. Available online: **www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/internet-organised-crime-threat-assessment-iocta-2016**

Family Kids and Youth (2017) *Cyberbullying*. London: Family Kids and Youth.

Frith E (2017) *Social media and children's mental health: A review of the evidence*. London: Education Policy Institute.

Guardian Saints (2017) *Online Safety Foster Carer Survey 2016*. South Croydon: Guardian Saints. Available online: **https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/b4613758/files/uploaded/Foster%20Carer%20Online%20Safety%20Survey%202016%20V1%2004.pdf**

Hamilton-Giachritsis C, Hanson E, Whittle H, Beech A (2017) *Everyone deserves to be happy and safe: A mixed methods study exploring how online and offline child sexual abuse impacts young people and how professionals respond to it*. London: NSPCC. Available online: **www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2017/impact-online-offline-child-sexual-abuse**

Martellozzo E (2017) *I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it*. London: NSPCC. Available online: **www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/mdx-nspcc-occ-pornography-report.pdf**

NSPCC (2016) *What should I do? NSPCC helplines: Responding to children's and parents' concerns about sexual content online*. London: NSPCC. Available online: **www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/what-should-i-do-nspcc-helplines-responding-to-childrens-and-parents-concerns-about-sexual-content-online.pdf**

NSPCC (2017) *44% rise in child sex offences involving the internet last year*. London: NSPCC. Available online: **www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/rise-in-child-sex-offences-involving-the-internet**

Ofcom (2016) *Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report*. London: Ofcom. Available online: **www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/93976/children-parents-media-use-attitudes-report--2016.pdf**

Palmer T (2015) *Digital Dangers. The impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people*. Ilford: Barnardo's.

Papadopoulos L (2017) *How does social media impact the mental health of young people?* London: Internet Matters. Available online: **www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/social-media-impact-mental-health-young-people**

Pavlick J (2017) *Extra care required: Balancing the internet lives of looked-after children*. London: Parenting for a digital future blog, London School of Economics and Political Science. Available online: **blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/2017/10/24/extra-care-required**

Royal Society for Public Health (2017) *#Statusofmind: Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing*. London: Royal Society for Public Health. Available online: **www.rsph.org.uk/asset/AAFB7DC1-35CE-4097-B26321C1667B5333.2D2662B7-A714-4ACB-A94A63BA544A8267/**

Sherman et al (2016) 'The Power of the Like in Adolescence: Effects of Peer Influence on Neural and Behavioral Responses to Social Media.' *Psychological Science* 27 (7).

Smith S (2012) *Study of Self-Generated Sexually Explicit Images & Videos Featuring Young People Online*. Cambridge: Internet Watch Foundation. Available online: **www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/IWF_study_self_generated_content_online_011112.pdf**

Stanley N, Barter C, Wood M, Aghtaie N, Larkins C, Lanau A, Överlien C (2016) 'Pornography, Sexual Coercion and Abuse and Sexting in Young People's Intimate Relationships.' *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing. Available online: **journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260516633204**

The Children's Society (2017) *Good Childhood Report 2017*. London: The Children's Society. Available online: **www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/the-good-childhood-report-2017_full-report_0.pdf**

The Royal Foundation (2016) *The Royal Foundation Taskforce Briefing*. London: The Royal Foundation.

Whittle H et al (2013) 'Victims' Voices: The Impact of Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse.' *Universal Journal of Psychology* 1(2): 59-71.

Wolke D, Lee K and Guy A (2017) 'Cyberbullying: a storm in a teacup?' *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 26, 899–908*.

Author: Laura Randall, Senior Manager – Child Safety Online, Impact & Innovations, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

With grateful thanks to: Christine Barter, Karen Bateson, Claudia Megele, Gill Parnell Jackson and Kate Stanley

Photograph: Graham Morgan

Please note, the cover image is sourced from a Research in Practice photo session and the person featured is not related to this subject matter.

Research in Practice
The Granary, Dartington Hall
Totnes, Devon, TQ9 6EE
tel: 01803 867 692
email: ask@rip.org.uk

This briefing comes with accompanying practical tips, links and contacts to support practitioners working with young people who are experiencing online abuse.

See - www.rip.org.uk/online-abuse

ISBN 978-1-904984-82-5

Research in Practice is a programme of The Dartington Hall Trust which is registered in England as a company limited by guarantee and a charity. Company No. 1485560 Charity No. 279756 VAT No. 402196875 Registered Office: The Elmhirst Centre, Dartington Hall, Totnes TQ9 6EL

www.rip.org.uk