

Challenges of new technologies and protecting children from sexual harm



**LUCY
FAITHFULL
FOUNDATION**

Scotland | Alba

Stuart Allardyce

Director

06.02.24

What are we talking about here?

- Possession, distribution and production of sexual images of children (child sexual abuse material / indecent images of children / child pornography)
- Sexual solicitation of children (online grooming / exploitation to abuse children offline or online)
- Conspiracy sexual crimes using online technologies

Aims of today's presentation

- Outline work of Lucy Faithfull Scotland (formerly Stop It Now! Scotland)
- Describe the current nature and scale of the issue of online child sexual exploitation
- Explain new facets of this kind of offending:
 - Youth perpetrated online harmful sexual behaviour
 - Role of encryption
 - AI and child sexual exploitation
 - Sexploitation
- What works in terms of prevention of online sexual exploitation
- What we can all do to prevent online harm before it happens

Stigma & Media Messages

CRACKDOWN Pervert helpline issues advice to Scots fiends before they act on sick desires amid crackdown on internet child abuse

Top cop says police are using the tactic after years of educating kids and parents about staying safe online

By Paul Thornton
25th March 2018, 10:01 pm



Lucy Faithfull Foundation

- UK wide charity
- Based in four locations: Bromsgrove, Epsom, Edinburgh, Cardiff

145 full-and part-time staff

Our purpose: To prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation

LFF is unique: we are the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to preventing child sexual abuse. We do this by working with those perpetrating abuse or at risk of doing so.

What do we do:

- Our Stop It Now helpline is the largest of its kind in the world, taking more than 16,700 calls a year. It helps anyone concerned about child sexual abuse, including those concerned about their own sexual thoughts and behaviour.
- Annually, we assess risk and provide interventions to hundreds of adults and adolescents. We help families where abuse has already occurred by advising statutory agencies and running intervention programmes.
- Our preventative work includes early intervention programmes for families considered at risk of harm, and public education initiatives.
- We also work to prevent harmful sexual behaviour among young people through our specifically tailored programmes and via our work in schools.
- We deliver training across the UK, reaching more than 2,000 professionals every year



Stop It Now - Lucy Faithfull Foundation Scotland

- Based in Edinburgh
- Background of Child Protection, Social Work, Criminal Justice, Police and Forensic Psychology

10 full-and part-time staff

Our purpose: To prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland

What do we do:

Confidential help and advice available to all concerned about child sex abuse.

1-1 intervention support and group work for

adults who are at risk of sexual offending, including those who are under investigation for online offences,

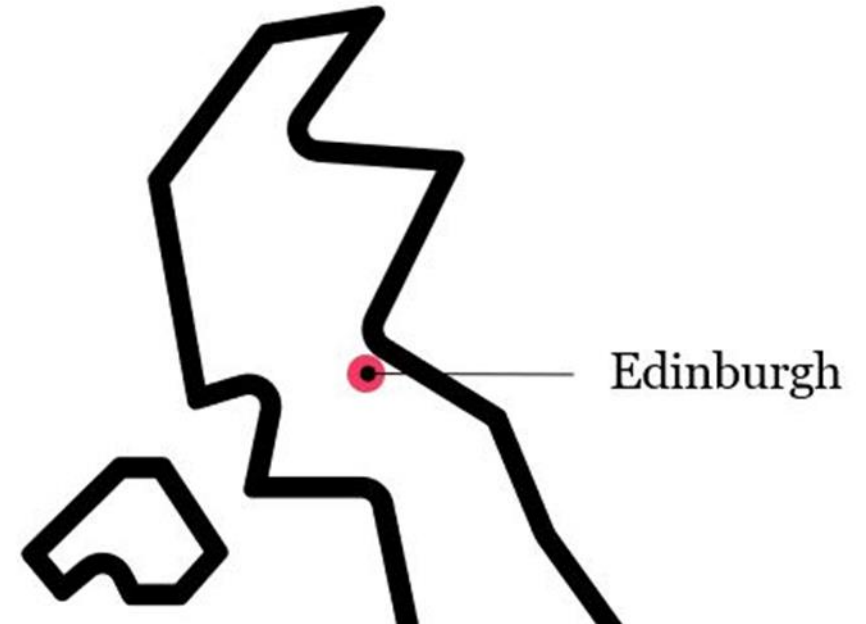
families and friends of people who are at risk of sexual offending or have been arrested for online offences,

children and young people (under the age of 18) who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour or have been arrested for online sexual offences

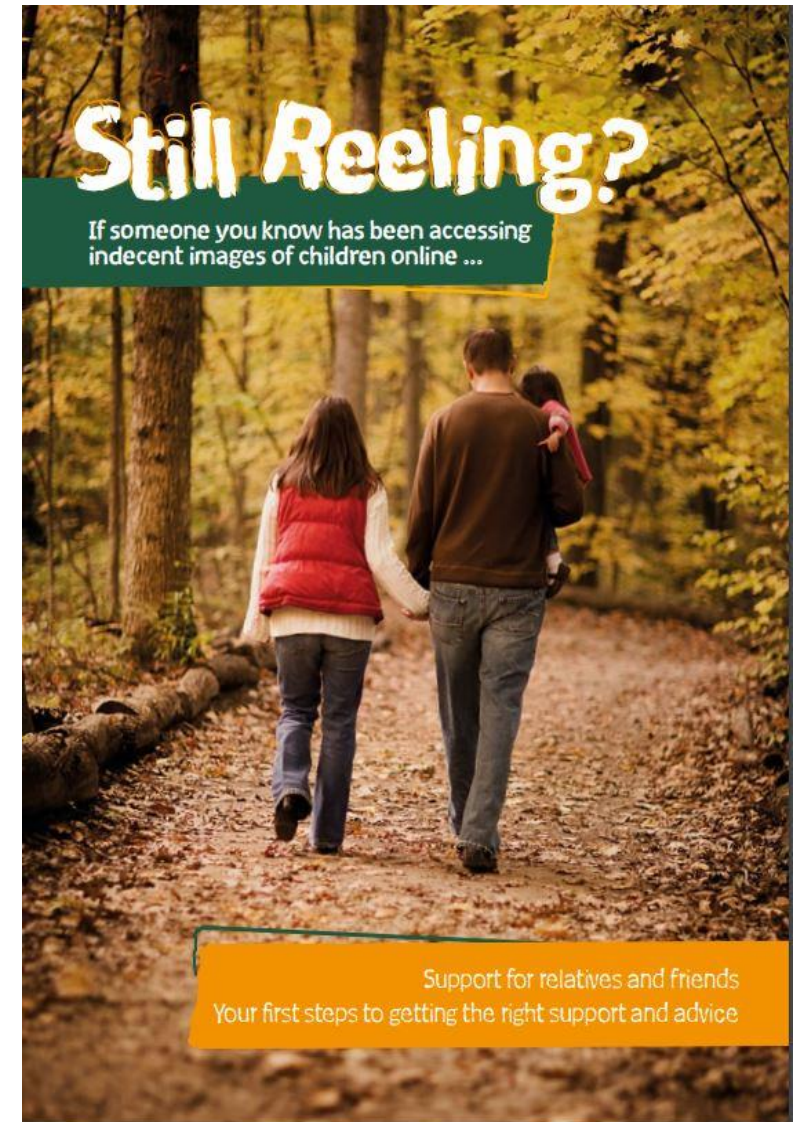
Advice, training and guidance for parents and carers, communities and professionals in children's services and criminal justice settings.

Deterrence campaigning and advocacy work in Scotland focused on preventing abuse before it happens.

Expert consultation, assessments and intervention for children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour; adults who have, or who are alleged to have, committed a sexual offence against a child; and protective adults, including parents and carers.



Getting Arrested in Scotland

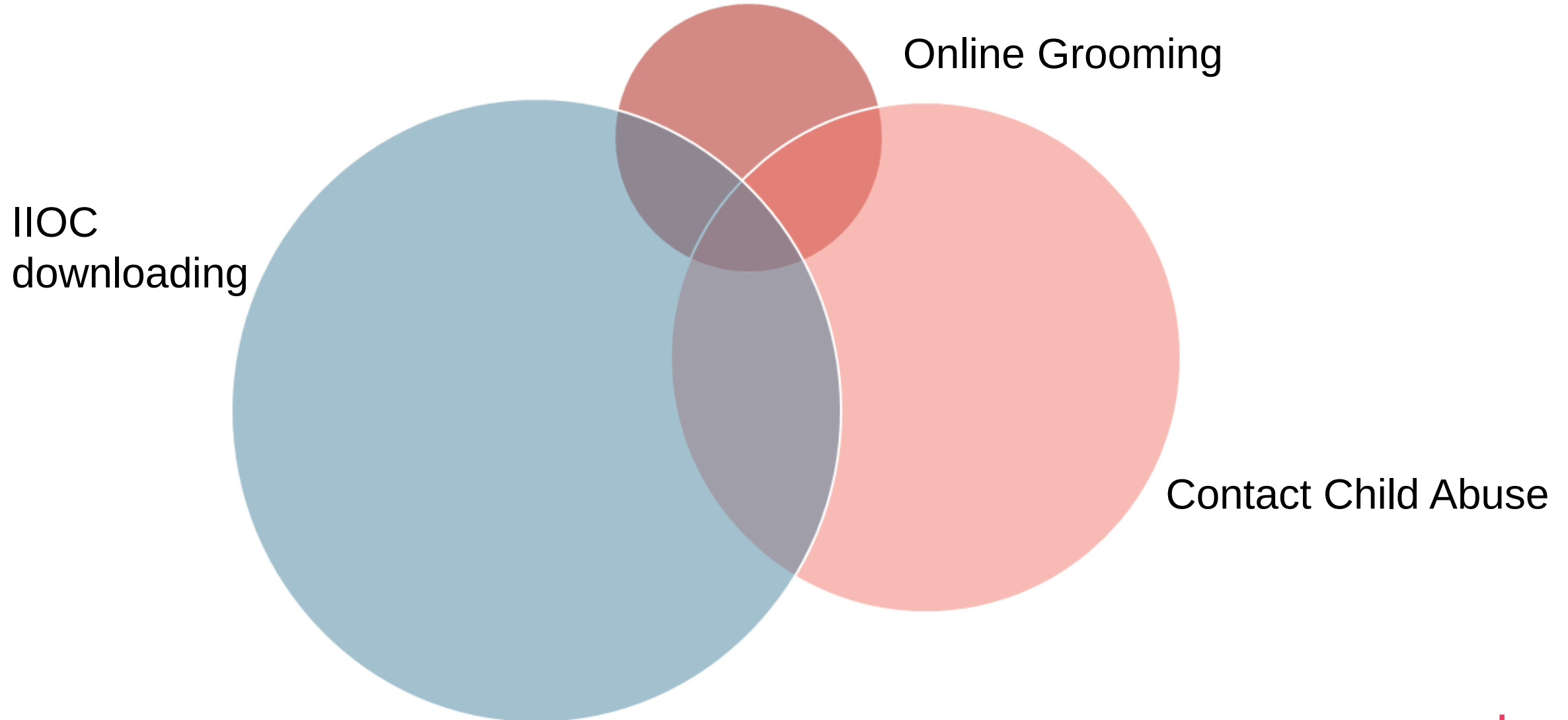


Jack

- Male 50, works as a Health & Safety Office
- Clinical Depression for 3 years coinciding with onset of offending. Socially isolated, working away from home. Married, currently separated, no children
- Arrested for accessing child sexual abuse material



Conceptualising the issue

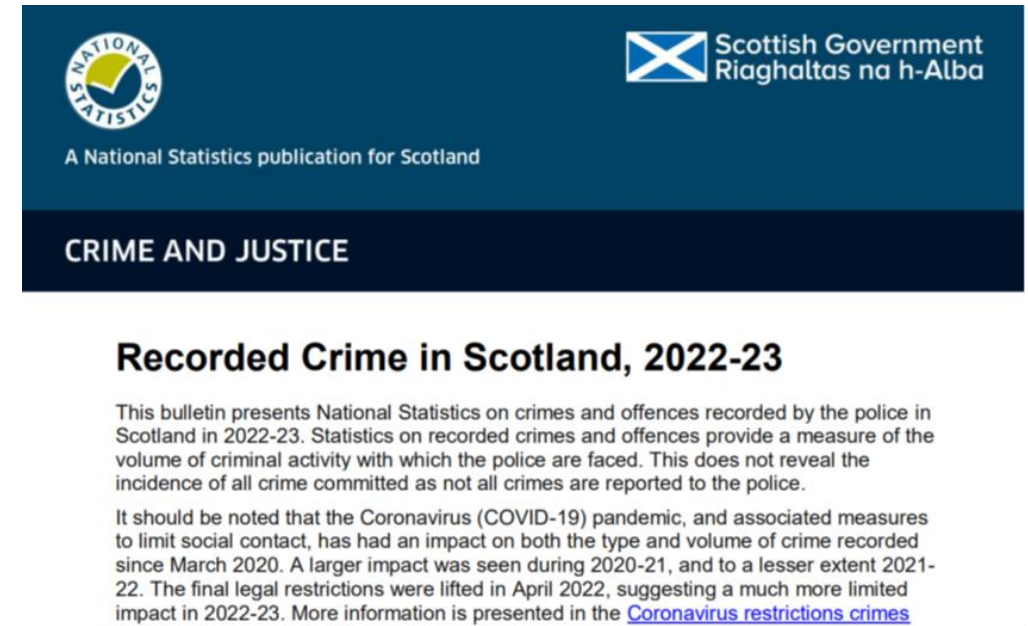


Legislation in Scotland

- The 'Civic Government (Scotland) Act' of 1982 states 'It is an offence to take, distribute or have in your possession an indecent image of a children under the age of 18'
- The 'Sexual Offences Act (2003)' created a new offence of sexual 'grooming' of a person under 16 by an adult aged 18 and over.
- Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 created offence of intentionally causing or incites another person to become a provider of sexual services, or to be involved in pornography, in any part of the world
- The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act (2008) made it an offence for an adult to send sexual communication to a child
- Additionally, the UK 'Criminal Justice Act' (2003) provides guidance on sentencing in line with the quantity of images held
- No current sentencing guidance

Scottish crime data

- 765 recorded sexual crimes involving indecent photos of children in 2022-23 (up 16% on previous year)
- 1,518 recorded sexual crimes of communicating indecently with a child
- Lack of good quality published data in comparison to England – 2022-23 there were 25,561 offences involving online sexual abuse of exploitation



Scale of the problem – online offending



Internet Watch Foundation data

The Annual Report 2022

#BehindTheScreens

A deep dive into the digital and social emergency happening #BehindTheScreens, in children's bedrooms.

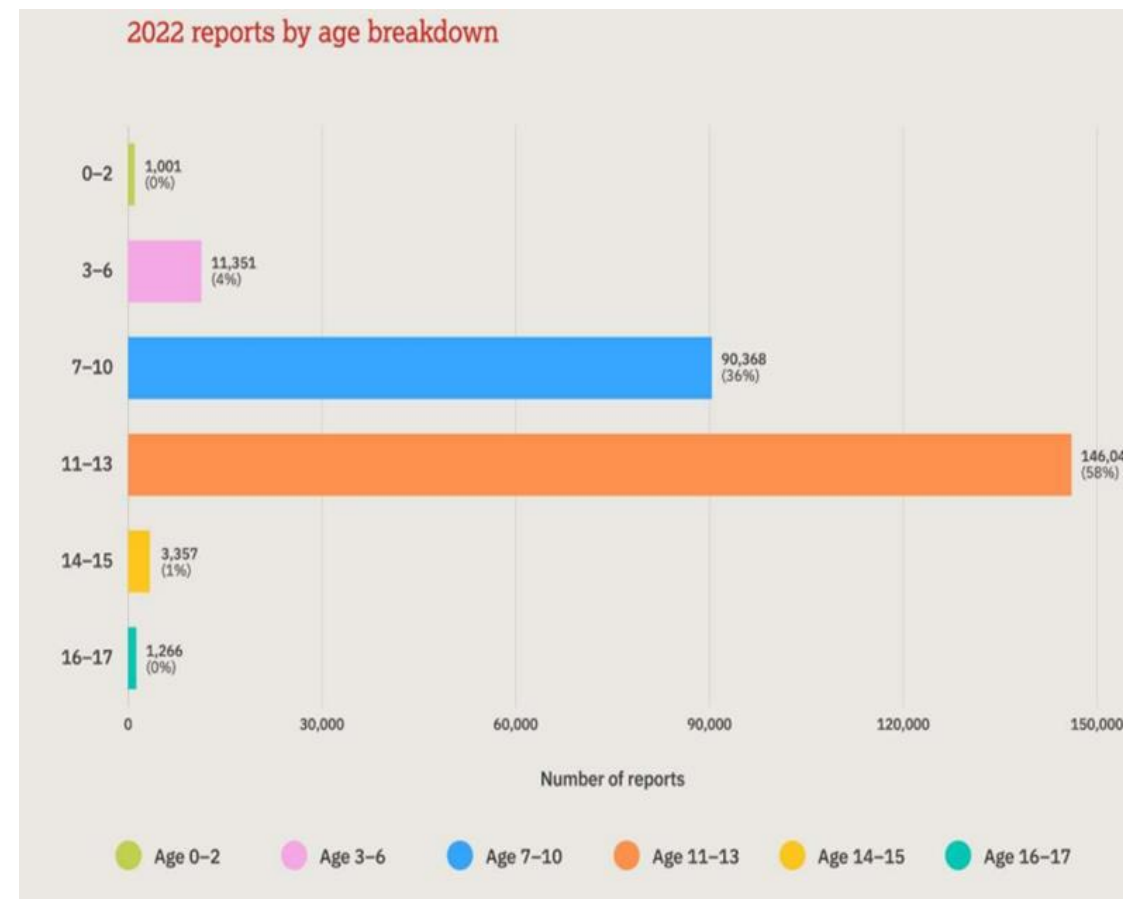
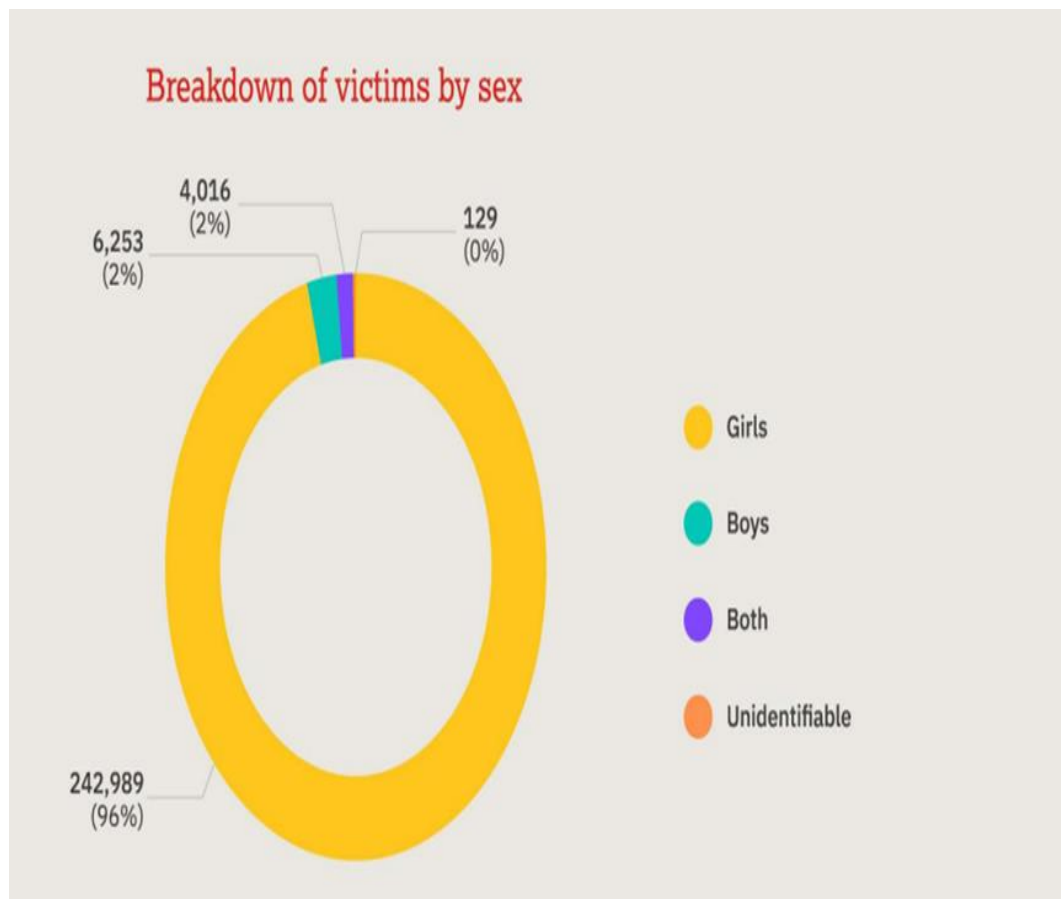
Internet Watch Foundation

to minimise the availability of online sexual abuse content, specifically child sexual abuse images and videos hosted anywhere in the world and non-photographic child sexual abuse images hosted in the UK

255,588 reports confirmed to show child sexual abuse imagery in 2021

32 million reports of CSAM by tech companies to NCMEC in 2023

IWF data – age and gender of children in CSAM



Dombert et al, 2016

In an online survey of 8,718 German males 4.1% reported sexual fantasies involving prepubescent children, 3.2% sexual offending against prepubescent children, and 0.1% a pedophilic sexual preference.

The overall frequencies for child pornography consumption and sexual contacts with prepubescent children were 2.4% (n = 209) and 1.5% (n = 132), respectively

Running head: IDENTIFICATION OF PEDOPHILIC INTEREST WITH CRT

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Identifying Pedophiles: Interest in Sex Offenders against Children with the Implicit Child Reaction Time Task

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This preprint has been accepted for publication in the *European Journal of Psychological Assessment* (May 7, 2016) and does not exactly replicate the final version. It is not a copy of the original published article and is not suitable for citation.

Impact

Online abuse is sometimes perceived as having less impact and being of less immediate concern than offline abuse by professionals. Evidence to date suggests it is no less impactful than offline-only sexual abuse (Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2016)

Victim blaming from professionals and parents / carers common

Use of manipulation, extortion etc to coerce and silence victim

They are often “directed” by the offender to perform sexual acts on themselves and/or others, which creates huge confusion for the victim in terms of even using the common language of perpetrator/offender because of the victim needing to make sense of the fact that they touched themselves and/or others in many incidents (Leonard, 2010)

Sense of ‘repeated re-victimization’ and being unable to break with your past as images continue to be circulated of your own abuse

What we have learnt so far

- The sheer volume of offenders overwhelms law enforcement's capacity to investigate, arrest and convict
- Online harm has enormous impact on children who are effected
- Highly gendered issue – mostly men seeking out images of young girls

HOLY SMOKE



Who commits these offences

- Offenders are a heterogeneous group ranging from diagnosable paedophiles to those who begin offending without a self-reported sexual interest in children
- Caucasian males.
- Typically well-educated, in some form of employment and with no history of involvement in the criminal justice system.
- Less stable intimate relationships than general population.
- Several studies reported that internet offenders experience problems with intimacy, emotional loneliness, low self-esteem and social skills.
- Autism overrepresented (research equivocal on this)
- Some possible subgroups, e.g. users of dark web may be more criminogenically orientated

Why do people offend

- Three As': Anonymity, Affordability, Accessibility
- Paedophilia? – problematic explanation (many offenders married, many
- Coolidge effect (novelty)
- Bikini Effect (impulsivity and risk)
- The coin effect (conditioning)
- Arousal diminishes the disgust response and widens range of things people are sexually interested in (Henshaw et al, 2018).
- Material viewed repeatedly can become normalised and, over time, fail to provide the original level of arousal (Fortin et al, 2018). These processes may lead to engagement with more extreme or deviant material, which can be exacerbated by algorithms that present users repeatedly with similar material (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2021). Many men convicted of child sexual abuse imagery offences have likened their behaviour to an addiction (Rimer and Holt, 2023).
- Capacity to be sexually interested in children

Jack

- Male 50, works as a Health & Safety Office
- Clinical Depression for 3 years coinciding with onset of offending. Socially isolated, working away from home. Married, currently separated, no children
- Compulsive collector of legal pornography and CSAM. 13 hard drives taken by police.
- Stated initially not interested in children sexually but found that his huge collection of pornography led to boundaries being blurred and viewing CSAM' made him feel like an outlaw' – transgression and illegality countered his growing boredom with porn.



Online legal pornography and CSAM

ACCESS DENIED

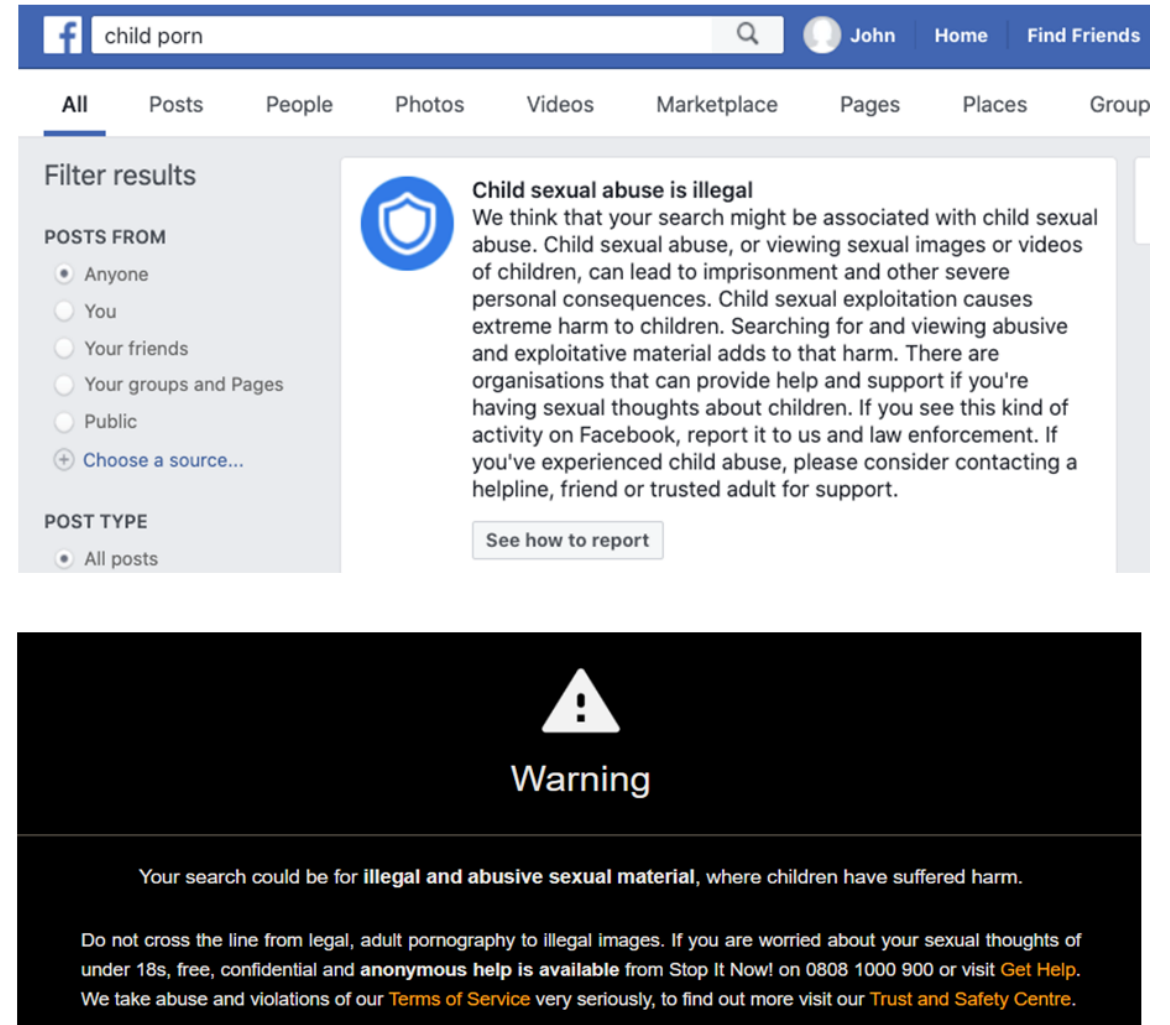
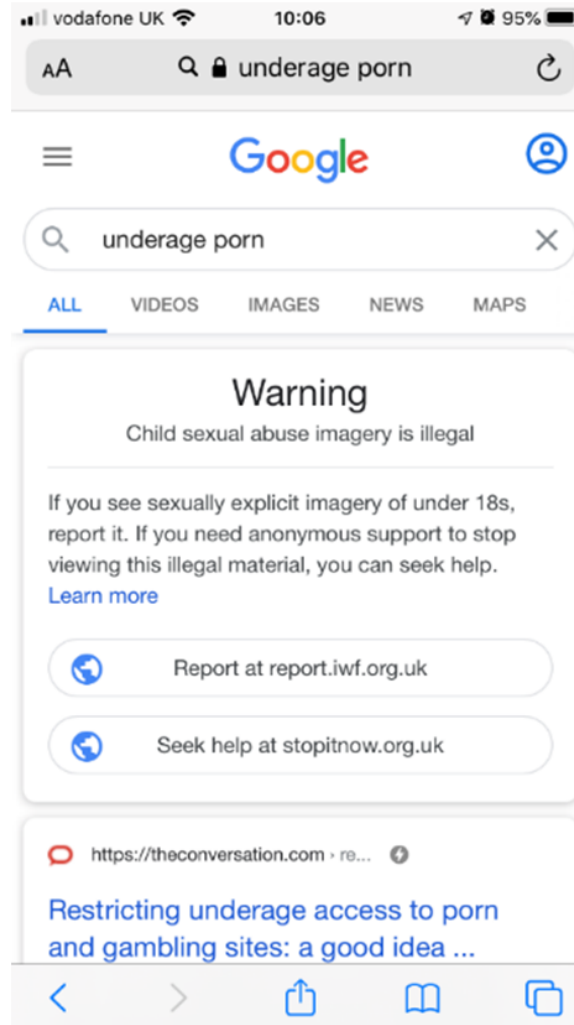
Access has been denied by your internet access provider because this page may contain indecent images of children as identified by the Internet Watch Foundation.

Deliberate attempts to access this or related material may result in you committing a criminal offence. The consequences of accessing such material are likely to be serious. People arrested risk losing their family and friends, access to children (including their own) and their jobs.

Stop It Now! in the UK can provide confidential and anonymous help to address concerning internet behaviour. They have helped thousands of people in this situation.

[0808 1000 900](tel:08081000900)
contactus.stopitnow.org.uk
find-help.stopitnow.org.uk

If you think this page has been blocked in error, please contact your service provider or visit [IWF's Content Assessment Appeal Process page](#).



Are online offenders the same as contact offenders?

- No - there are more disparities between internet and contact offenders than parallels.
- Disparities are found across social and situational characteristics, cognitive distortions, personality traits, offending behaviours and sexual deviancy
- Research to date suggests that most internet offenders do not go on to commit contact offences (dual offenders). More likely to commit same offence if rearrested.
- Internet offenders and, to a lesser extent, dual offenders tend to be better-educated and in stable employment. Contact offenders are more likely to be unemployed, have fewer educational attainments and a criminal histories
- Those at highest risk of crossover from online to contact offending have antisocial criminal histories and sexual preoccupations with children

Suicide risk

- **Operation NOTARISE in 2014:** 750 individuals arrested in relation to indecent images of children online (IIOC) offenses
- During the operation 24 (3.2%) apparent deaths by suicide were recorded following police contact (Crowther, 2016).
- Estimated cost of suicides of NOTARISE: **£34.8 million.**

New trends – Encryption

At the moment, social media companies scan their platforms to find and report child sexual abuse material (such as images, videos, and grooming conversations) to The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC pass these referrals to the relevant law enforcement agencies, so that abusers are arrested, and children are protected. The implementation of E2EE, without robust child safety measures in place, poses a catastrophic risk to the safety of children online, social media companies will no longer be able to find and report child sexual abuse material in the same way.

‘The dark web is now on the surface web’



Youth perpetration

Young People's self report data

FEBRUARY 2023

Responding to Online Threats: Minors' Perspectives on Disclosing, Reporting, and Blocking in 2021

Findings from 2021 quantitative research among 9-17-year-olds

Research conducted by Thorn in partnership with Benenson Strategy Group

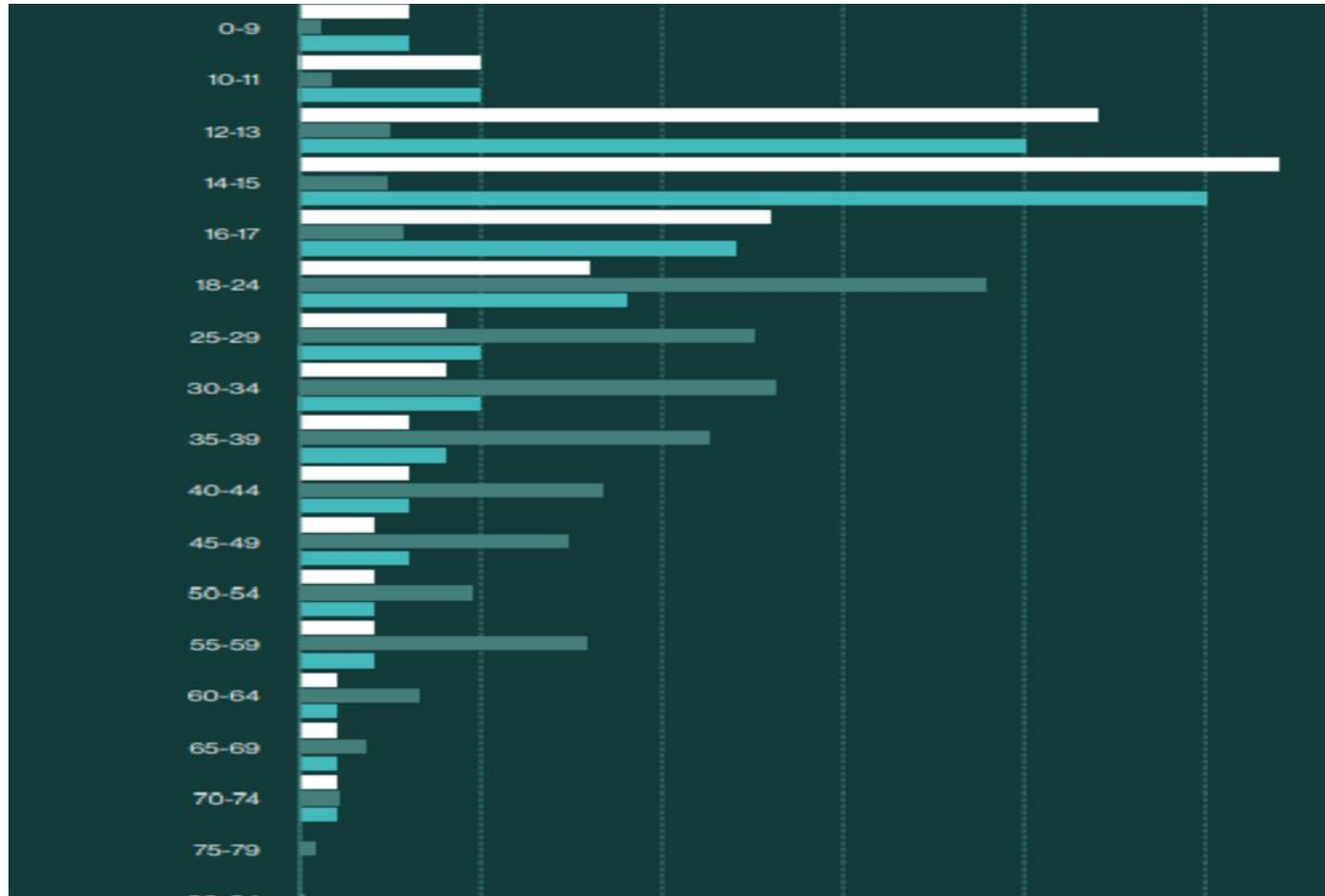
THORN 

 Benenson
Strategy
Group

As part of a larger study into the issue of self generated child sexual abuse material, in 2020, Thorn surveyed 1,000 children aged 9-17 about their attitudes and experiences around online interventions (e.g., blocking or reporting users) within the context of potentially harmful online sexual interactions.

The findings from that survey revealed minors reported having online sexual interactions with both peers and adults at concerning similar rates

Youth Perpetrated online sexual crime



**Online harm age
profile of
perpetrators
(England and
Wales 2022-23)**

Youth perpetrated online sexual crime

- Self produced sexual images
- Adolescent attention seeking
- Disinhibition and negative learning through access to online pornography
- Overlaps with overrepresentation of children with mental health issues, autism, LGBTQ+ youth, and children who themselves have been sexually exploited online

AI and CSAM

- Child sexual abuse images generated using artificial intelligence is a new and growing area of concern.
- May include realistic and non realistic images
- Can cover AI produced images or 'nudification' apps used by adults or adolescents.
- In total, 20,254 AI-generated images were found to have been posted to one dark web CSAM forum in a one-month period.
- Use of AI for grooming?
- Will make identification of actual children in images challenging / may swamp child rescue processes
- Concern that offenders see this as 'ethical' CSAM

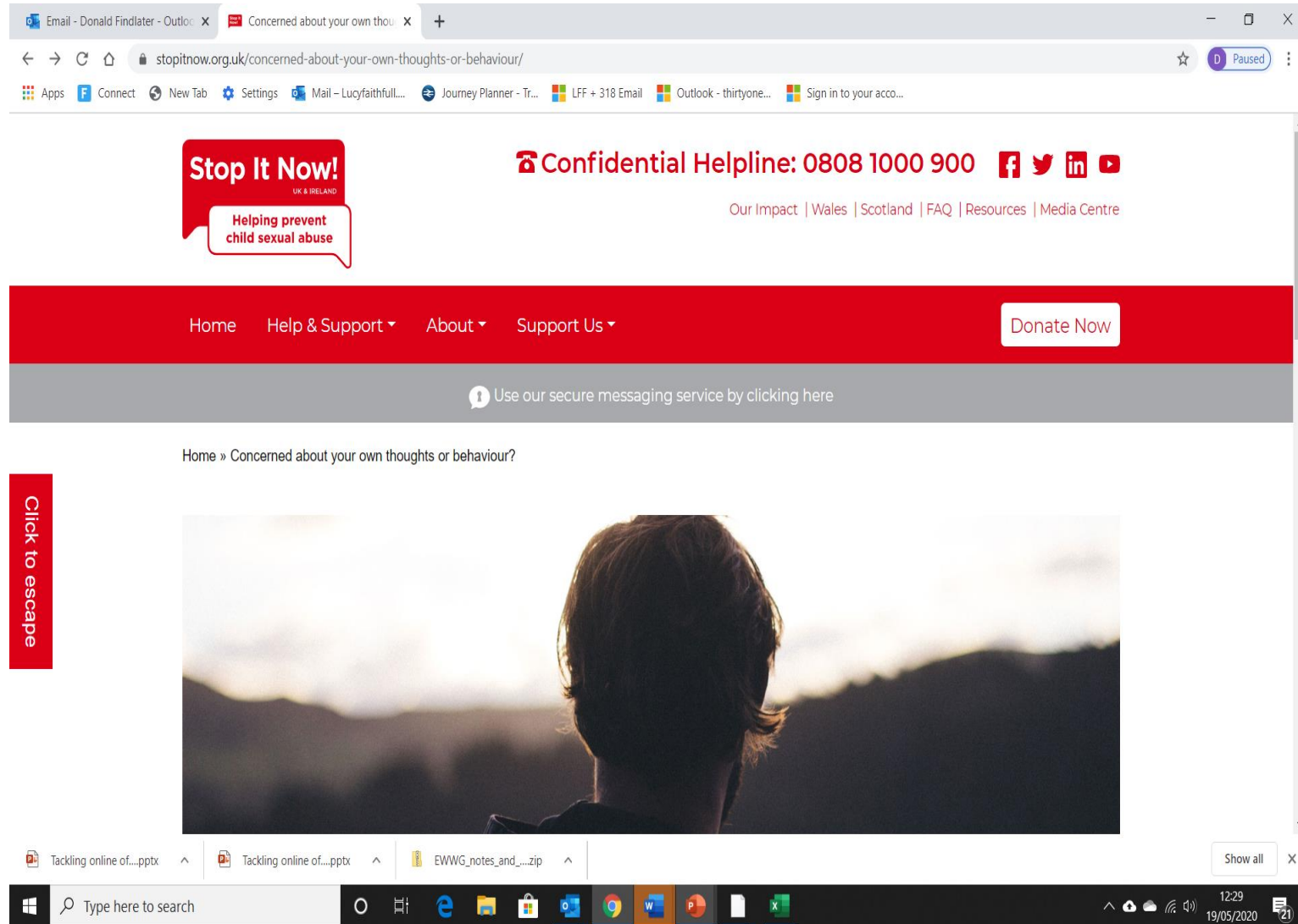
Sextortion

- Children are often approached on social media by strangers through fake profiles and by adults pretending to be much younger
- Use of encrypted spaces to seek out images
- This then used to extort more images from the child and / or money
- In the first 6 months of 2023, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) received more reports involving 'sextortion' than in the whole of 2022.
- Older teens (14-17 years old) are the most at risk, with boys apparently being targeted most often

Solutions

- Online Safety Act – placing the responsibilities with tech companies
- Parental education
- Additional supports for children at risk
- Therapeutic support for those affected by online child sexual abuse
- Public awareness about risks attached to legal porn use
- Deterrence and disruption campaign work
- Supports for those who share their own sexual images online (consensually or non-consensually)
- Online self help
- Rehabilitation for those in the criminal justice system

Get Help & Get Support websites - modules/content



In 2021/22 we had over 102k UK users to the Get Help offender pages with an average session duration of 2m 11s.

Globally we had over 128k users with an average session duration of 2m 11s.

Things we can all do

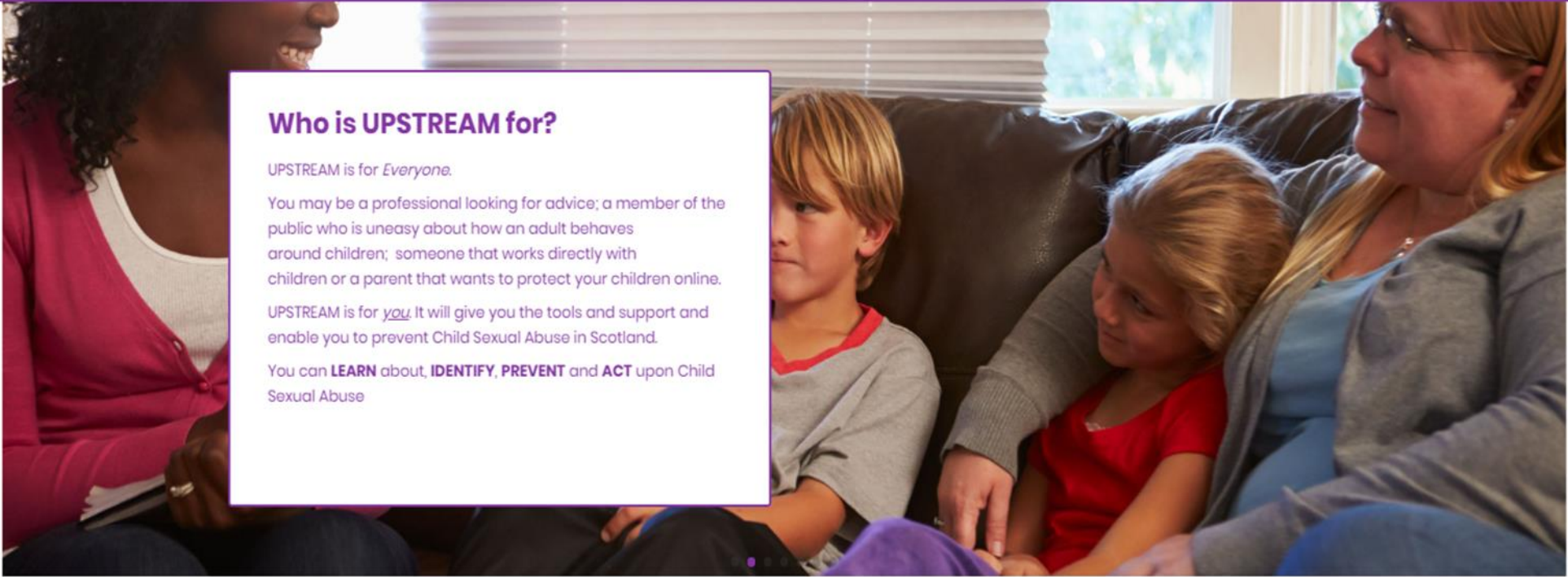


Preventing child sexual abuse **before** it happens in **Scotland**.

Call 0808 1000 900 or email scotland@stopitnow.org.uk

Search 

-  Know  Learn  Identify  Prevent  Act  Engaging Communities  Get Help 



Who is UPSTREAM for?

UPSTREAM is for *Everyone*.

You may be a professional looking for advice; a member of the public who is uneasy about how an adult behaves around children; someone that works directly with children or a parent that wants to protect your children online.

UPSTREAM is for you. It will give you the tools and support and enable you to prevent Child Sexual Abuse in Scotland.

You can **LEARN** about, **IDENTIFY**, **PREVENT** and **ACT** upon Child Sexual Abuse

Hide page

Stop It Now - Lucy Faithfull Foundation Scotland

Contact Details



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www.stopitnow.org.uk

<https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/>

0808 1000 900 (UK Helpline)