

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IMAGES

DOING MORE TO TACKLE
DEMAND AND SUPPLY

November 2016

NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the input from individuals in a wide range of organisations who are working together to tackle child sexual abuse images. Working on this report has been a great privilege – this is a policy area where everyone, regardless of whether in public, private or third sector, is working to the same goal. And it is this collaborative, multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder approach that will continue to yield the greatest benefit in tackling this challenge.

An objective of this report has been to summarise on-going activity in this area in order to assess and identify further steps need to be taken. I hope I have done this justice. Any omissions and errors remain my own.

Sonja Jütte

Contents

FOREWORD	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
Introduction	8
1. What are child sexual abuse images?	9
2. Why child sexual abuse images are a problem	10
2.1 The impact on children	10
2.2 Evidence of the scale of the challenge	14
2.3 Where does the offending behaviour that relates to the viewing of child sexual abuse images take place?	20
3. On-going activity to tackle child sexual abuse images	24
3.1 Global efforts: WePROTECT Global Alliance	24
3.2 Tackling child sexual abuse images on the open web through Google and Microsoft	25
3.3 Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)	27
3.4 Home Office Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)	29
3.5 The National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP)	30
3.6 Lucy Faithfull Foundation: Stop It Now!	32
4. What more needs to happen	35
4.1 Addressing the availability of child sexual abuse images: the right to remove	35
4.2 Addressing the demand for child sexual abuse images	37
5. The next steps on prevention: a focus on the drivers of demand for child sexual abuse images	39
6. Conclusion	42
Annex A	44

FOREWORD

The production and consumption of child abuse images online is creating a social emergency. Digital technology is making it ever easier for this abuse to proliferate, damaging the many children involved in this vile trade. But by each of us playing a part, and taking collective responsibility to keep our children safe, we can find solutions.

Behind each and every child sexual abuse image, abuse has occurred in the “real” world. These children are victims every time their image is viewed, and worse still, the knowledge that the image or film can be repeatedly viewed, and may never be removed, causes on-going trauma that they are forced to live with. And, to further heighten the seriousness of this abuse, we know there have been cases where the viewing of child abuse images escalates into abuse in real life.

This is an issue of considerable importance to the NSPCC. The challenge we are faced with is sizeable. There are many praiseworthy endeavours, and much valuable work already happening to try to keep our children safer online. It is almost universally agreed that this material is illegal and wrong.

But more must and can be done. Better understanding of the scale, nature and urgency of the challenge is vital. Ensuring that everyone – industry, government, law enforcement and charities like the NSPCC – plays their part is crucial. And a greater public understanding of the problem and its effects on children is also needed.

In this report, the NSPCC explores new evidence about size of the problem and presents real, tangible solutions to reduce both the supply of and demand for these images. Children must have the right to easily remove sexual images of themselves that are shared online. More treatment and support services are needed to stop potential perpetrators in their tracks. Most importantly we must continue to seek new preventive solutions to stop these crimes from happening in the first place. This report sheds light on where we should focus our collective effort.

But we also think in the long term we need a different approach—one that places emphasis on a minimum set of standards that industry must comply with to keep children safe online. We question whether it is sufficient for an issue as serious as this to be dealt with through a voluntary system of self-regulation. And we believe there needs to be more transparency, so we can truly understand the scale and impact of the issue with which we are dealing and the progress that is being made.

We must be ambitious in our belief that the UK can, and should, be the hardest country in the world in which to access and view child sexual abuse images. And we must all play a role to ensure that children receive the right levels of protection from this devastating abuse online.

The internet can be a magical place for children. It should play a part in a child's learning, in positive development and discovery. It should be a place of positive growth, and a place where children can safely play, imagine and explore.

But the reality is that in its darkest corners terrible crimes are being committed against children that can result in lasting damage for those who become victims of online sexual abuse. Unless we act to stamp out the demand and supply of these images, we risk, as a society, permitting and even enabling this horrific abuse to take root.

Now is the time for us to challenge ourselves to end the scourge of child sexual abuse images in the UK, and to work together so that we all play our part protecting our children.



Peter Wanless
NSPCC Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out what child sexual abuse images are, why they are a problem, it summarises on-going activity to tackle child sexual abuse images and also what more needs to happen to further tackle child sexual abuse images. In our assessment we identified a number of different lenses through which we need to look in order to understand the scale of the challenge. By doing this, we have drawn together, in a new way, the available evidence on the extent of the challenge. If we use the international research and apply it here, to arrive at a UK estimate, the possible scale of this challenge in the UK is sobering. Crucially, we believe there is sufficient evidence to point clearly to the need for further action now, as we have detailed in chapters four and five of this report.

There is already fruitful collaboration between industry, government, law enforcement and the third sector which we have summarised in chapter three of this report. Encouragingly, the right agencies and organisations are working together towards a common goal. Work is happening at the national and international level. Global initiatives such as the WeProtect Global Alliance are extremely important as this challenge transcends our national borders and it is imperative that the UK Government continues to play an integral role in global initiatives.

We need to continue to work together if the UK is to remain one of the toughest countries in the world in which to view, share or produce child sexual abuse images. We have identified a number of areas where progress can be made now. As a charity that has the protection of children at its core, the NSPCC will be working towards making a child's "right to remove" a reality. Clear routes that enable sexualised images that have been generated by children and young people themselves to be removed permanently and completely must be made a reality. This process must be clear and accessible to children and young people. This is not something that the NSPCC can do alone. Partnership working will be instrumental in making this happen.

The research presented in this report is international and limited in scale, as there is no UK-based population level research in this space. On-going work by the National Crime Agency must be supported by the sharing of data and information by agencies, including industry, so that we use existing information to create a better and more accurate understanding of how we do more to tackle the problem, across both supply and demand.

In writing this report, we have pulled together many different available data sources. While there are a large number of players working towards the same goal, it has not always been straightforward to source relevant data relating to what measures work and what

measures work less well. For example Google and Microsoft both took further steps to block web searches for child sexual abuse by removing this content from search indices in November 2013. It has not been possible to fully gauge what kind of impact these actions have had. Google has not been able to share up-to-date data; the latest data dates to January 2015. Microsoft has not been able to share any data to show the effect the measures taken in November 2013 have had. If we are going to work towards the goal of ending the viewing and sharing of child sexual abuse images, sharing information about what measures work, what measures are less effective cannot be optional. Without transparency about what our activities and initiatives achieve progress cannot be made as quickly as it needs to be.

Further research is required to understand how we can make our online environment less likely to facilitate the viewing and sharing of child sexual abuse images. We need a deeper, actionable understanding of what can prevent offending behaviour – this includes insights relating to the individual and insights relating to the online environment. The NSPCC is making a contribution by funding and commissioning research into what stops possible offenders from viewing images. But this alone is not enough and others must join efforts to contribute to the evidence base, to reduce both supply and demand.

Our law enforcement agencies work hard to bring perpetrators to justice every day and we must continue to support their crucial work. Yet it is clear, from the scale of the problem, that we cannot “arrest our way out” of this challenge. We also need to work with offenders and potential offenders with the aim of changing behaviours. Organisations like Stop It Now! provide an invaluable, yet under-resourced service.

In the course of this work we have uncovered some areas that cause us concern. There is evidence that suggests that there are UK viewers of “teen” pornography. The evidence suggests that there is a journey from viewing pornography with young looking models to move onto illegal child sexual abuse images. Overall, this is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed. Specifically the imbalance between how we as a society consider child sexual abuse material in the online world versus the offline world needs to be rectified.

But we also think in the long term we need a different approach – one that places emphasis on a minimum set of standards that industry must comply with to keep children safe online. We question whether it is sufficient for an issue as serious as this to be dealt with through a voluntary system of self-regulation. As a society we have a choice whether we fuel the demand for child sexual abuse images or whether we seek to curtail it. Our choices, as a society, on what we consider to be acceptable can help to tackle this challenge. Ultimately, it is a focus on prevention that will make the long-term difference, and we must all must work together to make that happen.

Introduction

This report focuses on child sexual abuse images. There has been considerable activity in this space already in recent years involving the third sector, industry and government, together making progress to better protect and safeguard children. This report reviews some of the activity in this space and identifies the need and opportunity to do more in order to tackle this issue. We describe some of the steps we need to take if the UK is to remain one of the toughest countries in the world in which to view, share or produce child sexual abuse images.

This report sets out:

1. what child sexual abuse images are;
2. the evidence for why child sexual abuse images are a problem and the nature of the problem;
3. a summary of the on-going activity to tackle child sexual abuse images;
4. what more needs to happen to better protect children and young people from child sexual abuse images and to ensure that the UK remains one of the toughest countries in which to view, share or produce child sexual abuse images; and
5. how we can ensure that some potential drivers of demand for child sexual abuse images, that we have identified, are addressed.

1. What are child sexual abuse images?

Child sexual abuse images are a visual record of the sexual abuse of a child. They can include images, photographs, pseudo-photographs, animations, drawings, tracings, videos and films. They are defined in a number of pieces of UK legislation.¹

In the UK it is illegal to possess, distribute or produce child sexual abuse images.² Downloading an image is treated as possession for sentencing purposes in the UK.³

The Sentencing Council's Sexual Offences Guidelines⁴ set out what the different categories of images are. Images that involve penetrative sexual activity with a child are classed as category A images. Images that involve non-penetrative sexual activity are classed as category B images. Other child sexual abuse images not falling within categories A or B fall into category C. It is important to understand that these categorisations are not consistent across the globe. It is also important to understand that there can be some ambiguity around what images fall into each category, particularly category C.

It is the nature of the image that determines whether an image is a child sexual abuse image, and not who produced it. These images may be produced, possessed or distributed by adults. These images may also be produced, distributed (that is, shared) or possessed by young people under the age of 18. We refer to this latter group of images as youth-generated images. This is also sometimes called “sexting”.

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- 1 Protection of Children Act 1978 (England and Wales); Civic Govt Act 1982 (Scotland); Sexual Offences Act: key changes England and Wales; Memorandum of sexual offences: section 46 of Sexual Offences Act 2003; Police and Justice Act 2006; Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008.
 - 2 These images are also sometimes termed “indecent images of children” (IIOC). In this report we use the terminology child sexual abuse images.
 - 3 Sentencing Council (2013) *Sexual Offences Definitive Guidelines*; page 76 https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Final_Sexual_Offences_Definitive_Guideline_content_web1.pdf (accessed 30 August 2016)
 - 4 These guidelines are published by the Sentencing Council for England and Wales. Scotland's Sentencing Council was set up in October 2015. There are no specific sentencing guidelines for Scotland on this matter yet.

2. Why child sexual abuse images are a problem

Here we set out what we know from children and young people about the impact of child sexual abuse images on them from a number of data sources. We then discuss the scale and nature of the problem. Finally, we discuss “where” in the digital world offending takes place.

2.1 The impact on children

There are a number of ways in which child abuse images have a significant impact on children and young people. First, there are impacts on the child who is depicted. Second, there are impacts on the children who see these images.

The child depicted in the image is a real person who is a victim. And each time an image is accessed there is re-victimisation, violation and degradation. The knowledge that their image can be repeatedly viewed and may never be removed contributes to the on-going trauma that victims face.⁵ There is evidence to suggest that fear of people viewing the content can prevent the victim from speaking out about their experiences and seeking help.⁶

Sharing photos and images is part of everyday life for many people, but the increased speed and ease of sharing imagery has brought concerns about young people generating and sharing sexual imagery of themselves. One of these risks is increasing young people’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Research⁷ has highlighted the additional complexities that technology allows in the online sexual abuse of children and young people:

- it allows increased ease of access to children and young people via a multitude of platforms and devices; and
- the escalation to abuse is faster online; the offender has greater access to control to continue the abuse; and offenders use past images, or access to images, to blackmail for more content – as well as to prevent disclosure.

5 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*, (accessed 22 September 2016).

6 Palmer, von Weller and Loof (2010) *The impact of internet abuse on children and how best to intervene*; The Link – The Official Newsletter of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse in Neglect (ISPCAN) Colorado USA

7 NSPCC research on the impact of online sexual abuse – forthcoming

Recent research carried out on behalf of the NSPCC and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner looking at a representative sample of young people, reported that 16 per cent of young people consulted had generated a naked or semi-naked image of themselves.⁸ More than half of this sub-sample (the 16 per cent) had shared this image with someone else – with a third sending it to someone they did not know. A fifth of this sub-sample had not wanted to create a naked or semi-naked image, with the image having been derived through some form of pressure or coercion.

Whether uploaded voluntarily or through coercion and control, once published online, it is difficult to manage and remove content. Images can be replicated and circulated at an alarmingly fast rate. Self-generated child sexual images have the potential to remain online indefinitely where they can be shared among paedophile networks, used to blackmail, groom, exploit, harass, bully and humiliate the young person and even used to encourage the exploitation and abuse of others.

A study for IWF in 2012 found that 88% of the self-generated, sexually explicit online images and videos of young people that IWF analysts encountered had been taken from their original location and uploaded onto other websites. The study aimed to establish a snapshot of how many self-generated, sexually explicit images and videos of young people there are online. It also sought to discover how much of this content was copied from its original source and put on other websites.

In less than 48 working hours, IWF analysts encountered more than 12,000 such images and videos spread over 68 websites. Most of the images and videos (88%) appeared on “parasite websites”, meaning they were taken from the original area where they were uploaded and made public on other websites. These parasite websites had often been created for the sole purpose of offering sexually explicit images and videos of young people and therefore contained large amounts of sexually explicit content⁹.

It should be noted that, despite the evidence cited here, relatively little is known about how the use of technology in child sexual abuse impacts on the outcome for the victim. The NSPCC has commissioned research¹⁰ to undertake an exploratory evaluation of the impact of online sexual abuse on victims, with possible implications for therapeutic interventions and training for professionals.

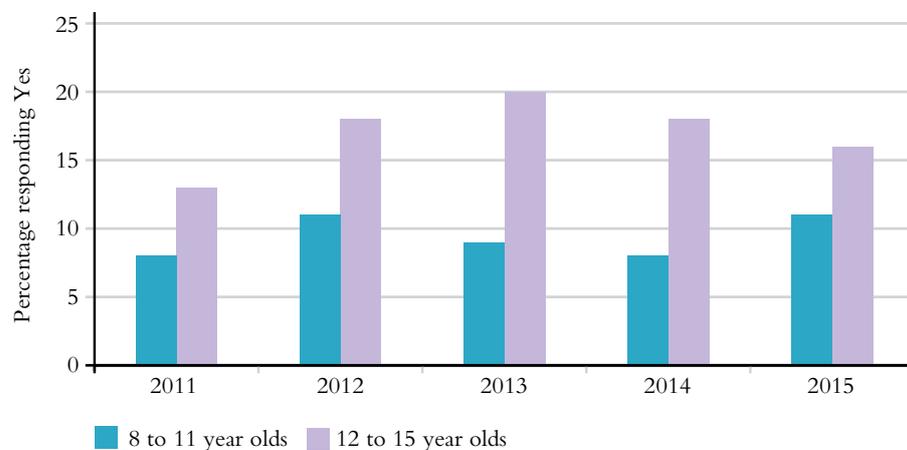
8 Martellozzo *et al.* (2016) “... *I wasn’t sure it was normal to watch it.*” Page 47

9 IWF (2012) Young people are warned they may lose control over their images and videos once they are uploaded online <https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-iwf/news/post/334-young-people-are-warned-they-may-lose-control-over-their-images-and-videos-once-they-are-uploaded-online> (accessed October 2016)

10 NSPCC Research –forthcoming

Every year since 2011, Ofcom has asked children and young people who use the internet, if they have seen anything online that they found worrying, nasty or offensive in some way. This is a broad measure and in no way focussed on child sexual abuse images. The data shows that in 2015, 16 per cent of 12–15 year olds found material online that they found offensive, nasty or worrying in some way. For 8 to 11 year olds the figure was 11 percent. The bar chart below shows this and also includes the data for earlier years. Over the past five years a significant portion of these children and young people reported that they found material online that they found offensive, nasty or worrying in some way.

Figure 1: Viewing harmful content online: in the last year, have you seen anything online that you found worrying, nasty or offensive?



Source: Ofcom (2015) *Child and parents: media use and attitudes report*

Childline is the UK’s free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people. It’s a safe, confidential space where children and young people can talk about their problems. Childline data provides insight into the sorts of issues children who are upset, scared or worried are seeking support and advice about.

During 2015/16, there were 68 counselling sessions where the young person specifically mentioned viewing child sexual abuse images on the internet. While the numbers are small, the impact on the children was considerable¹¹. Most of these images had been accessed unintentionally, for example after clicking on a pop-up or an unknown link.¹² On viewing these images, young people were extremely anxious about encountering trouble with the police and

11 There were 291,753 counselling sessions during the year. This figure excludes counselling that relate to a third party concern. In 2015/16 there were 1,392 Childline counselling sessions with young people worried about sexting. Counselling sessions relating to sexting are not included in this analysis of children viewing child sexual abuse images.

12 NSPCC (2016) “*What should I do?*” NSPCC helplines: responding to children’s and parents’ concerns about sexual content online, pg 15.

were reluctant to tell anybody else about what had happened. They feared that they would not be believed if they told someone that they had accidentally found these images, or they were worried that they would be arrested. In some situations, pop-ups had appeared which suggested they would be investigated or fined for watching this type of content online, which only reinforced these fears. Some young people were so concerned about the repercussions of the material that they had viewed online that they were unable to sleep, or were having anxiety attacks.

I feel so anxious. I saw this video of a child doing sexual things to someone and I'm so scared that I am going to get into trouble for it. I know it's illegal and so I'm worried that I will be arrested. I haven't slept because I have been so sick with worry about it. I am too scared to talk to anyone about it other than Childline. I haven't even told my parents.

(Teenage girl)

I'm being bombarded with pop-up windows showing pornographic images. It's starting to make me really anxious because some of them are of children. I'm worried someone is going to think I've been looking at the sites and I'm going to get into trouble. I don't know what to do because it's becoming a problem. I think someone is accessing my computer or something because I don't understand why I'm getting them. I can't ignore it anymore.

(Anon)

I can't get the images I saw on the internet out of my head because they were of children. I don't know what to do or who to talk to. I don't want people thinking I viewed them intentionally because I didn't. I feel so depressed – I wish I'd never seen them.

(Boy, aged 12 to 15)

In addition to the impact on the children who are shown in the images and those who see them, there is also evidence to suggest that a proportion of those found in possession of child sexual abuse material pose a further risk to children through perpetrating contact child sexual abuse^{13,14}. Some offenders also show child sexual abuse

13 Contact child sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

14 Seto, M. *et al.* (2011) *Contact Sexual Offending by Men with Online Sexual Offenses*; Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment

material to young people online in order to exploit and desensitise them, pressuring them to engage in the production of more indecent material.¹⁵

2.2 Evidence of the scale of the challenge

There are a number of different lenses through which we need to look in order to gain an understanding of the scale of the challenge facing society with regard to child sexual abuse images. This includes what we know about police-recorded offences; what we know about people's sexual interest in children and what we know about people's activity with regard to viewing child sexual abuse images. Below we set out and discuss what is known about the scale of the challenge so far.

One source of information about the scale of the challenge is the number of police-recorded offences of indecent images. In all four nations of the UK it is a crime to create, possess or distribute child sexual abuse images. These crimes are recorded in the Home Office Counting Rules under the miscellaneous category of "Obscene Publications", a category which includes a variety of offences relating to obscene material and which is not focussed exclusively on children.

The chart below contains the available statistics on "Obscene Publications".¹⁶ These figures are the maximum number of possible offences which have been recorded in relation to children. Some of these offences will relate to adults, but we don't know how many.

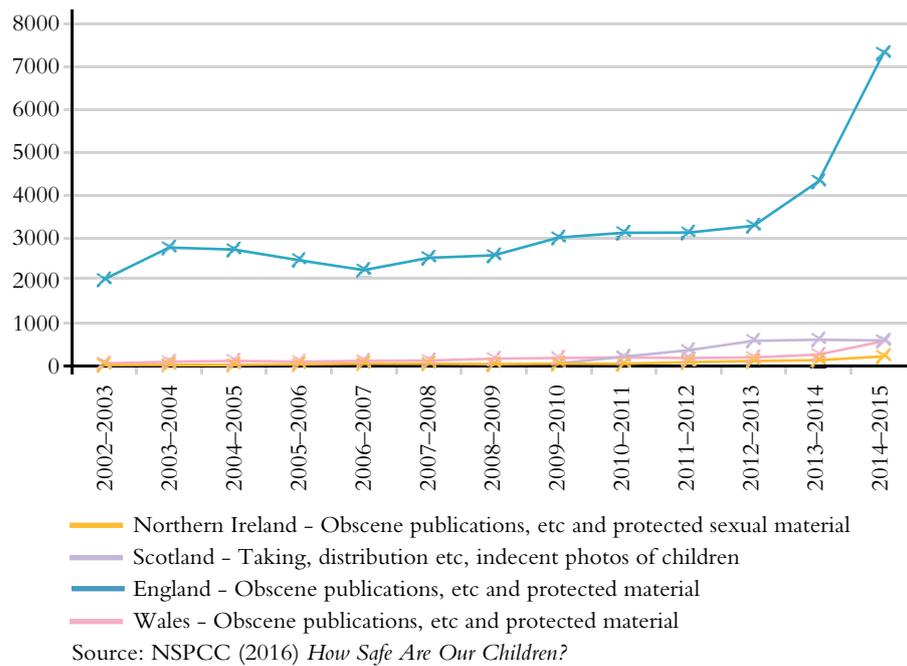
In the past five years the number of police-recorded offences for "Obscene Publications" has more than doubled in all four nations of the UK.

- In England the number increased by 134 per cent to 7,324 between 2010/11 and 2014/15;
- In Wales the number increased by 184 per cent to 587;
- in Scotland the number increased by 168 per cent to 603 recorded offences; and
- in Northern Ireland the number increased by 292 per cent to 231 recorded offences.

15 Sheldon, K. (2011) *What we know about men who download child abuse images*. The British Journal of Forensic Practice 13: 221–234.

16 Source of statistics: Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2016) *Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2015*; Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Statistics Branch (data provided to NSPCC); Scottish Government Recorded Crime Statistics (data provided to NSPCC).

Figure 2: Obscene publications data



The Office for National Statistics (ONS) attributes this overall increase across the UK to a rise in offences relating to making and distributing indecent or pseudo-photographs of children and adults through the use of internet and mobile phones. The police have also stated that they are giving more attention to child sexual exploitation cases, which is likely to have led to an increase in the number of offences recorded under this category.¹⁷

This data only tells us about people who have been caught. The number of people who are producing, distributing or viewing child sexual abuse images in the UK, and how that is changing, is unknown. The wider global numbers, and how they are changing, are also unknown.

Assessing the scale of the issue is not straightforward. One way of conceptualising this is to look at the proportion of the population who have a sexual interest in children, how sexually active the population is, and also, given that our focus is on child sexual abuse images, the extent to which people use the internet, as that is a pre-requisite for being able to engage in this behaviour. Below we make this assessment based on existing data.

¹⁷ Bentley, H. *et al.* (2016) *How Safe Are Our Children?*, page 42

Paedophilia

Paedophilia is defined as a persistent sexual interest in pre-pubescent children, as reflected by one's sexual fantasies, urges, thoughts, arousal or behaviour.¹⁸ The evidence relating to the occurrence of paedophilic interest is relatively limited. Researchers have suggested that this is likely to be partly due to the methodological difficulties of investigating a highly socially undesirable inclination.¹⁹ There are clinical case studies and descriptive studies that suggest that female paedophiles exist.²⁰ Overall, the evidence suggests that paedophilia appears to be much more common among males than females.²¹

It is very important to note that the proportion of adults who report having a sexual interest in children does not equate to the number of adults who offend, as not all people act on their sexual interests and sexual urges.

There is little weighty, international evidence around the number of people who have a sexual interest in children. There have only been a small number of international population-level studies in recent years that provide such estimates, and all are focussed exclusively on men. One study also asked respondents whether they viewed child sexual abuse images. These studies are discussed below. The research studies discussed below varied in how they defined a "child".

A German study, Dombert *et al*, published in 2016, assessed male self-reported sexual interest in children (including child prostitution and child sex tourism) at community level and examined the link between strictly defined sexual fantasies and behaviours²². This study focussed on pre-pubescent children, which were defined as children aged twelve or younger.

A total of 17,917 men aged 18 or over were invited to participate in the survey via a market research panel. Participants were granted anonymity and confidentiality – actual data were stored on a university server separate from the data that coded participation status. This meant that it was impossible to identify specific individuals in case legal authorities intended to prosecute men who had admitted criminal behaviour.

18 Seto, M. (2009) *Pedophilia, Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*

19 Santilla *et al*. (2015) *Men's sexual interest in children: one year incidence and correlates in a population based sample of Finnish male twins, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*

20 Chow, E.W.C. and Choy, A.L. (2002) 'Clinical characteristics and treatment responses to SSRI in a female pedophile', *Arch. Sex. Behav.* 31, cited in Seto, M. (2009) 'Pedophilia', *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*

21 Seto, M. (2009) 'Pedophilia', *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*

22 Dombert *et al* (2016) *How Common is Men's Self-Reported Sexual Prepubescent Children?* The Journal of Sex Research

Overall, 8,718 German males (48.7 per cent) completed the questionnaire. The study covered a number of aspects relating to people's self-reported sexual interest in pre-pubescent children including:

- i) 4.1 per cent (n = 358) reported sexual fantasies involving pre-pubescent children.
- ii) Overall, 2.4 per cent (n = 209) reported consuming²³ child sexual abuse images.²⁴

The findings relate to reporting ever having had sexual fantasies involving pre-pubescent children and ever having consumed child sexual abuse images.

Dombert *et al.* (2016) discuss prior research in this area. They note several smaller-scale studies that explored self-reported sexual interest in community samples in the form of sexual fantasies and behaviours. Prevalence estimate for community males' sexual behaviours involving children ranged from 0.04 per cent to 5 per cent;²⁵ whereas child-related sexual fantasies ranged between 4 per cent and 13 per cent.²⁶

A Finnish study published in 2015 assessed men's sexual interest in children and calculated a one-year incidence rate, i.e. only covering the last twelve months.²⁷

For this study, researchers determined that the population of interest was 5,000 twins between all Finnish speaking twin pairs born by the end of 1971 and currently residing in Finland. The sample specifications were drawn from the Central Population Registry of Finland. The group consisted of 5,000 men representative of the Finnish population of this age.

1,310 individuals completed the questionnaire that they received by post (26%). The cover letter declared that participating in the study was voluntary and that all participants had complete anonymity as the questionnaire covered highly sensitive topics. It was also decided that the questionnaire should not contain any questions about the identity of the participants in order to make responding more probable.

23 "Consuming" is the language used in this study.

24 Dombert, B. *et al.* (2016: 12) 'How Common is Men's Self-Reported Sexual Interest in Prepubescent Children?', *Journal of Sex Research*

25 The following references are cited in Dombert *et al.* (2016): Ahlers *et al.* 2011; Brière and Runtz 1989; Frohmuth, Burkhart and Jones 1991; Hall, Hirschman and Oliver 1995; Templeman and Stinnett 1991; Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille and Paulhus 2009.

26 The following references are cited in Dombert *et al.* (2016): Ahlers *et al.* 2011; Brière and Runtz 1989; Williams *et al.* 2009; Wurtele *et al.* 2014

27 Santilla *et al.* (2015) 'Men's sexual interest in children: one year incidence and correlates in a population based sample of Finnish male twins', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, page 120–121

Participants were instructed that their answers should reflect their sexual interests during the past 12 months.

This study found that 3.3 per cent of respondents reported a sexual interest in children aged 15 or younger in the past 12 months. Sexual interest in children younger than 12 was reported by 0.2 per cent of respondents. The respondents were also all between 33 and 43 years old. This study did not specifically ask questions about child sexual abuse images.

A different Finnish study published in 2009 looked at adults' sexual interest in children (as well as associations between childhood sexual interactions with other children, and preferred and actual age of sexual partners)²⁸. The analyses presented in this study were based on 1,312 male twins aged between 33 and 43. The prevalence of any indicators of sexual interest or activity directed towards children under the age of 16 was 3.5 per cent (n = 46). This study did not specifically look at the consumption of child sexual abuse images. It is not clear whether the questions were focussed on the previous twelve months or a longer time period.

So what might these studies tell us about the prevalence of people viewing images of child sexual abuse in the UK? There are some significant limitations to what we can take from these studies. First, we should note that Dombert *et al* is the only population study that reports on the viewing and use of child sexual abuse images so we do not have a broad evidence base to draw from. Second, as Santilla *et al.* (2015) note, variations in age of consent, legal policy and demographics mean there may be social and cultural differences in the prevalence of, or the likelihood of admitting to, sexual interest in children.²⁹

Following Dombert *et al*, we have only considered males aged 18 – 89 years of age, as that is the age range that Dombert *et al* considered in their study. There are 24.86 million males aged 18 to 89 in the UK.³⁰ Not all adults in the UK use the internet. Ofcom data suggested that in 2015, 87 per cent of people use the internet (on any type of device in any location).³¹ Ofcom data is not disaggregated by gender; we have therefore used the 87 per cent figure. This suggests that we can assume a total internet using population of men aged 18 to 89 of 21.63 million.

28 Santilla *et al.* (2009) 'Childhood sexual interactions with other children are associated with lower preferred age of sexual partners including sexual interest in children in adulthood' *Psychiatry Research*

29 Santilla *et al.* (2015) 'Men's sexual interest in children: one year incidence and correlates in a population based sample of Finnish male twins', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*

30 ONS population estimates MYE2: Population Estimates by single year of age and sex for local authorities in the UK, mid-2015

31 Ofcom (2016) *Adults' media use and attitudes*, p 23

Dombert *et al* report that the overall frequency of use of child sexual abuse images in their sample was 2.4 per cent (n = 209).

If we were to apply the same level of self-report data to the male UK population as Dombert *et al* identified in a representative sample of the German population and applying standard statistical techniques to calculate a confidence interval, this would equate to an estimate that there may be between 450,000 and 590,000 males aged 18–89 in the UK who have at some point viewed and used child sexual abuse images³².

From our review of the evidence we have not identified a UK equivalent to the Dombert *et al* study. However, we consider our estimates to be informed by the best evidence we have available, even if it is international. Further, as outlined earlier, there are multiple lenses through which we need to look in order to assess the scale of the challenge; applying Dombert *et al*'s findings to the UK may give us one such lens on the scale of the challenge.

The estimates presented above differ significantly from previous estimates that have been published in the UK. In 2013, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) estimated that approximately 50,000 UK-based individuals were involved in downloading and sharing indecent images of children (IIOC) during 2012. In 2016, the National Police Chief's Council reported that they fear that up to 100,000 people have viewed indecent images of children online³³. The article states that “three years ago it was estimated that half that number sought out child abuse images on the internet, but officials fear the figure has doubled with forces arresting an increasing number of sex offenders”.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) is working with academic and other partners (including the NSPCC) to develop a methodology that will review the previous estimates, seeking to quantify the scale and prevalence of UK online offending more fully. It is important that all the evidence is considered and that we get a full and accurate assessment of the nature of the threat in the UK.

A fuller and more accurate assessment of the nature of the threat in the UK is to be welcomed. The NSPCC hopes to have contributed to this assessment by critically reviewing the evidence available and piecing this together with other pieces of evidence, such as for example, police-recorded offences and also the increasing number of URLs hosting child sexual abuse imagery that the Internet Watch Foundation identify. We acknowledge that this is not the final word

32 Please note that estimates have been rounded to the nearest 10,000.

33 Inews essential daily briefing, 16 October 2016 <https://inews.co.uk/essentials/news/health/thousands-look-for-help-child-abuse-images-online/>

on this matter – as we have set out clearly, there is much that we don't yet know.

Crucially, however, we believe there is sufficient evidence to point clearly to the need for further action now, as we have detailed in chapters four and five of this report. We consider that the evidence drawn together in this report suggests that the challenge we are facing in the UK is considerable and that arresting and prosecuting our way out of the situation is not feasible. Further, we consider that the evidence presented here sufficiently makes the case to take action now in order to reduce the demand for and the supply of child sexual abuse images further.

Overall, we consider that the evidence presented here suggests there is much merit in an approach to tackle this type of offending that moves “upstream” as much as possible and aims to prevent offending before it occurs, prevent it from re-occurring and to change people's behaviours in order to deter and disrupt engagement in the viewing, possessing or distribution of child sexual abuse images. We would welcome more research in this area and are very keen that any research is solutions-focussed.

2.3 Where does the offending behaviour that relates to the viewing of child sexual abuse images take place?

Child sexual abuse images are, by their very nature, viewed via the internet. The internet is sometimes viewed very much like a utility – like a water or gas network. However, the internet is not one homogenous system, but an ecosystem of technologies, protocols, hardware, software and content. It essentially connects millions of computers together globally, forming a network in which any computer can communicate with any other computer as long as they are both connected to the internet.³⁴

A simple framework that cuts through the complexity has been proposed by the Global Commission on Internet Governance, who argue that it is helpful to view the internet in four layers: content layer, application layer, logic layer and infrastructure layer.³⁵ Detail on these layers is set out in Annex A.

34 CIGI and Chatham House (2016) *Global Commission on Internet Governance: One Internet*, page 3

35 *Ibid.*, pages 3 and 4.

From the perspective of doing more to tackle child sexual abuse images, the two layers that are most relevant are the content layer and the application layer. The content layer is the most visible to end users and includes web content, pictures, photographs, videos (user-generated, video conferencing and streaming of movies) as well as multimedia of all kinds (video games, virtual reality and so on). The application layer includes the software with which end users directly interact. The most prominent application is the World Wide Web. This also includes mobile apps, search engines, social media platforms and platforms for sharing user-generated content.

The necessary governance and coordination across layers are carried out by a combination of private sector policies, new global institutions, national laws and international cooperation.³⁶ It has been argued that there is increasing discord and competing interests that are unfolding in the current debate concerning the control and governance of the internet and the associated infrastructure.³⁷ The need to reduce the demand for and the supply of child sexual abuse images is located in a policy context that has a national dimension, a global dimension and a very large number of stakeholders.

The content layer broadly contains the open web and the deep web. The open web is the portion of the web that is readily available to the general public and searchable with standard web search engines such as Google, Bing or Yandex. The deep web is the internet that standard search engines do not index. This includes private webmail, private cloud storage, online banking, companies' databases, your private cloud storage, members-only online forums and so on.³⁸

Research dating from 2009 suggests that the overall search engine demand for child sexual abuse images is between 0.19 per cent and 0.49 per cent of (open) web-based searches.³⁹ However, as discussed on page 25 of this report, in 2013, both Google and Microsoft took steps to start blocking web searches for child sexual abuse by removing this content from their indices, filtering search results and returning warnings when specific searches were used. This means that while search terms may still be demanded by people who want to view this content, the content will not come up in the searches – essentially supply is already being withheld on the open web.

36 *Ibid.*, page 3.

37 Hathaway, M.E. (2015) *Global Commission on Internet Governance, Paper No. 11 Connected Choices: How the internet is challenging sovereign decisions*, page 1

38 Marshall, G. (2015) *Tor infinity, and beyond: everything you need to know about the Dark Web*, www.techradar.com/news/internet/web/tor-infinity-and-beyond-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-dark-web-1311729

39 Steel, C. (2009) 'Web-based Child pornography: quantification and qualification of demand', *International Journal of Digital Crime and Forensics*

Child sexual abuse content is also shared via file-sharing networks, as are other materials such as books, music, films and games. The networks allow internet users to connect directly, forming groups and collaborating to become user-created search engines, virtual supercomputers, and file systems as opposed to connecting via a server. These networks enable child sexual abuse images to be shared.

Media attention on file-sharing networks has focused on unauthorised sharing of copyrighted music and video files, but pornography is also widely available. This includes both legal images featuring adults and illegal child sexual abuse images.

For example, a US study of a single file-sharing network suggests that 244,920 US computers shared 120,418 unique known child sexual abuse image files on Gnutella (a file-sharing network) during the study year. More than 80 per cent of these computers shared fewer than 10 such files during the study year or shared files for fewer than 10 days. Less than 1 per cent of computers made high annual contributions to the number of known child sexual abuse image files available on the network (100 or more files). The findings of this research indicate widespread low-level trafficking of child sexual abuse images by US computers in one file-sharing network. The researchers noted that their measures were not comprehensive and should be considered lower bound estimates.⁴⁰ There are no comparable UK figures in the public domain that we have been able to identify.

The dark web is the portion of the deep web that is inaccessible through standard web browsers.⁴¹ This means that you need a special web browser to reach it – an example is the widely used Tor network. Tor is an encryption tool called The Onion Router (TOR).⁴² Tor provides a method for communicating online anonymously. Overall Tor empowers anyone who wants control over their web footprint. Other examples are I2P and Freenet.⁴³

This has positive uses, such as whistle-blowers who report news that companies would prefer to suppress or human rights workers in countries with repressive governments. Alternatively, this anonymity can be used to trade illegal goods such as drugs, weapons, arms, child sexual abuse images or engage in illegal activities such as illegal financial transactions, terrorism or murder. Offences relating to child sexual abuse image viewing, sharing and production are some of a wide range of offences that can be committed on the dark web.

40 Wolak *et al.* (2014) 'Measuring a year of child pornography trafficking by US computers on a peer-to-peer network', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 28: 347–356

41 Chertoff, M. and Simon, T. (2015) *The impact of the dark web on internet governance and cyber security*, page 3.

42 Jardine, E. (2015) *The Dark web dilemma: Tor, anonymity and online policing*, page 1

43 Moore, D. Rid, T. (2016) 'Cryptopolitik and the Darknet', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*

Trying to build a picture of what kind of material is found on the dark web is difficult. There is evidence that suggests that the most common uses for websites on TOR hidden services are “criminal, including drugs, illicit finance and pornography involving violence, children and animals.”⁴⁴ A different study, where the methodology is based on requests for the “hidden services” in the dark net (as opposed to websites) suggests that child sexual abuse content is the most popular type of content on the TOR Dark Net.⁴⁵ It is worth noting that both these studies are based on TOR, which is, as explained above, an example of an encryption tool.

44 Ibid., page 21

45 Owen, G. and Savage, N. (2015) *The Tor Dark Net*, Global Commission on Internet Governance, page 8

3. On-going activity to tackle child sexual abuse images

There has been considerable activity to tackle child sexual abuse images in the UK and across the world. Here we outline activity including global efforts through the WeProtect Global Alliance, companies such as Google and Microsoft and organisations such as the IWF and Home Office, and other law enforcement activity in this area. This demonstrates that action can and is being taken to tackle the sexual abuse of children online.

3.1 Global efforts: WePROTECT Global Alliance

The WePROTECT Global Alliance was formulated in December 2015, combining WeProtect and the Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online to create a dedicated multi-stakeholder movement to end the sexual exploitation of children online.

In March 2016, the WePROTECT Global Alliance Board agreed upon a vision to identify and safeguard more victims, apprehend more perpetrators, and end online child sexual exploitation.⁴⁶ The focus of this activity is fourfold:

- Securing high-level commitment from all parts of the international system on the need to end online child sexual exploitation and making resources available for this purpose;
- Supporting comprehensive national action, by providing authoritative guidance to countries and organisations that support the development of national responses to online child sexual exploitation;
- Galvanising global action, by catalysing and driving global initiatives that bring together industry, countries, law enforcement agencies and international and civil society organisations to develop the critical interventions needed to end online child sexual exploitation; and
- Developing strategy and governance, including securing a long-term future for the WePROTECT Global Alliance and a clear and stable governance structure.

46 The WePROTECT Global Alliance (2016) *Our Strategy to End the Exploitation of Children Online* <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5630f48de4b00a75476ecf0a/t/578408b5f7e0ab851b789e14/1468270775764/WePROTECT+Global+Alliance+Strategy.pdf> (accessed on 21 September 2016)

At the core of the WePROTECT Global Alliance is establishing and developing coordinated national responses to online child sexual exploitation, guided by the WePROTECT Model National Response to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

The Model National Response details the capabilities required by a country to enable the delivery of a comprehensive national response to both online child sexual exploitation and wider issues of child sexual abuse. It will support governments to achieve the aims of:

- Enhancing efforts to identify victims and ensure that they receive the necessary assistance, support and protection;
- Enhancing efforts to investigate cases of online child sexual exploitation and to identify and prosecute offenders;
- Enhancing efforts to increase public awareness of the risks posed by children’s activities online, including the grooming of children and self-production of images that result in the production and distribution of new child sexual abuse material online; and
- Reducing as much as possible the availability of child sexual abuse material online, and thereby reducing the re-victimisation of children whose sexual abuse has been depicted.

3.2 Tackling child sexual abuse images on the open web through Google and Microsoft

In July 2013, the then British Prime Minister David Cameron called on Google and Microsoft to take steps to stop web-based child sexual abuse images.⁴⁷

In November 2013, both Google and Microsoft took steps to block web searches for child sexual abuse by removing this content from their indices, filtering search results and returning warnings when specific searches were used.⁴⁸ This is an example of a clear, practical step that made a considerable difference to people’s ability to access these images.

The impact of this action has been assessed and an academic study found that the query volume for child sexual exploitation material fell by 67 per cent (between July 2013 and July 2014) while query volumes for adult materials remained steady.⁴⁹

47 David Cameron speech <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-internet-and-pornography-prime-minister-calls-for-action> (accessed 23 August)

48 Steel, C. (2015) ‘Web-based child pornography: the global impact of deterrence efforts and its consumption on mobile platforms’, *Child Abuse and Neglect*

49 *Ibid.*

Data from Yandex, the largest English language search engine outside the USA, were compared with data from Google and Microsoft, as Yandex had not introduced comparable measures to remove child sexual exploitation content from their indices. The purpose of this comparison was to test the hypothesis that search traffic has simply moved to other search-engines. The Yandex results showed no decline in searches for child sexual exploitation material from July 2013 onwards and no increase in adult materials over the same period. These results suggest that there is no support for the hypothesis that the search traffic has moved.⁵⁰

Google has invested heavily in developing and using technical solutions to prevent the discovery of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). Google has taken a number of steps to tackle this material, specifically:

- Filtering: preventing search queries returning links to CSAM content using a list of prohibited websites;
- Classification: using algorithms and machine learning to automatically determine whether or not a query is attempting to access CSAM; and
- Supporting the work of the IWF through an “engineers in residence” programme which has developed innovative image and video technology to tackle this issue.

It is important to note that Google had also undertaken significant efforts to tackle child sexual abuse images prior to this. For example:

- they signed up as an “electronic service provider” with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children⁵¹ in the US (NCMEC) before 2002 for the purposes of reporting Google Search results to NCMEC;
- they have been using messages on the bottom of search results letting people know they removed content for child sexual abuse images since 2002; and
- they started taking child sexual abuse image blacklists from NGOs like NCMEC and the IWF and blocking these images from Google search results in 2009.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimisation.

Overall Google's efforts have had a significant impact on the web traffic of child sexual abuse images. Data from Google suggests that between January 2013 and January 2015, there was an eightfold reduction in the web traffic of child sexual abuse images.⁵² Google have not been able to share any more up-to-date data.

Microsoft have not been able to share any data to show the effect that the measures taken in November 2013 have had.

3.3 Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is the internet industry's hotline, set up by industry. The IWF's international reporting solutions, notice and take-down services, and blocking/filtering services are key elements which provide the industry with the mechanisms needed to tackle online child sexual exploitation. Specifically, IWF focus on tackling child sexual abuse content that is hosted anywhere in the world, criminally obscene adult content hosted in the UK as well as non-photographic child sexual abuse images hosted in the UK.

The IWF receives reports, verifies content and requests the removal of content. Its assessments of images are trusted by the police and the internet industry worldwide. The IWF also proactively searches for child sexual abuse images and videos using the latest technology. Once child sexual abuse images have been identified by the IWF, they issue a take-down notice and get the images removed. Content hosted in the UK is removed quickly – usually in less than two hours.⁵³

It is important to remember this is a global problem. Data show that 0.2 per cent of the world's known child sexual abuse imagery is hosted in the UK.⁵⁴ The IWF 2015 data show that 57 per cent of known child sexual abuse content was hosted in North America; 41 per cent was hosted in Europe (which for these purposes includes Russia and Turkey); 2 per cent was hosted in Asia; less than 1 per cent was hosted in Australasia / South America / Africa / hidden services.⁵⁵

The data below show the number of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs – sometimes informally called a web address) that the IWF confirms as hosting child sexual abuse images and videos globally.

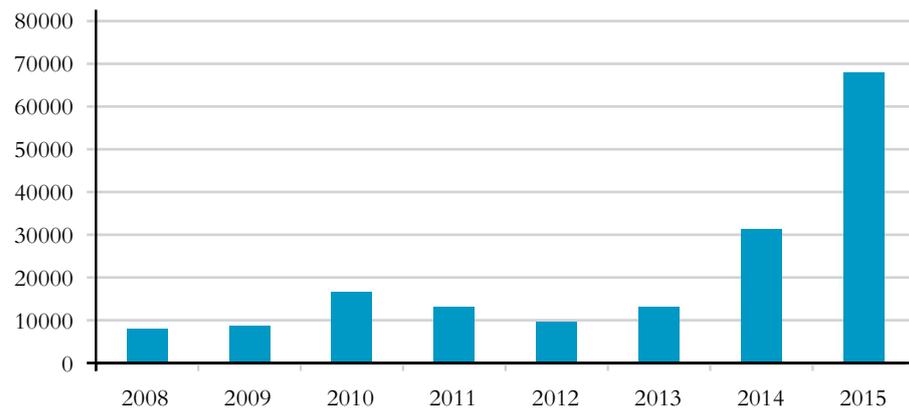
52 This material is from the prospectus for WePROTECT Industry Event London, September 2015: *Key themes and next steps* (page 4)

53 <https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-iwf> (accessed 23 August 2016)

54 IWF (2015) *Annual Report*, page 2

55 *Ibid.*, page 13

Figure 3: The number of URLs confirmed as hosting child sexual abuse



Source: IWF data

In 2015 the IWF identified and worked with partners to remove 68,092 URLs that were hosting child sexual abuse imagery worldwide. This is a 118 per cent increase on the previous year. The reason for the sharp increase in 2015 was the first year that the IWF proactively searched for illegal images after being granted these powers in 2014. Previously the IWF was only permitted to work on reports made by the public.

It is important to note that this time series does not show the total number of URLs that host child sexual abuse images globally. It shows the URLs that the IWF has found, assessed and removed. The total number of URLs that host child sexual abuse images globally is currently unknown.

The IWF is continually developing technologies to better disrupt the global distribution of child sexual abuse content online, such as by creating the IWF Image Hash List, developed in 2015 and launched in 2016.

An “image hash” is a unique code that is generated from the data in an image. IWF turn child sexual abuse images into unique codes (hashes), which is, essentially, a digital fingerprint of an image. Deploying such a list enables companies to automatically match known images before they appear on a company’s services.

Deploying the IWF image hash list enables companies to prevent:

- the upload of a child sexual abuse image on their systems;
- the sharing of an image through a company’s services; and
- the use of a company’s hosting services by a child sexual abuse website.

Each child sexual abuse image is assessed manually by two expert IWF analysts. These enhanced quality checks are designed to ensure that each image is categorised accurately in accordance with UK Sentencing Council Sexual Offences Guidelines. The image hashes are also categorised to support international use of the image hash lists, as the categorisations for different types are not consistent across the globe.

The image hashes on the IWF Image Hash List come from public reports, IWF analysts proactively searching for child sexual abuse images themselves and the UK Home Office’s Child Abuse Image Database (CAID). This database includes images that aren’t yet online⁵⁶.

3.4 Home Office Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)

CAID was developed by the Home Office in collaboration with UK law enforcement and industry partners to assist in investigations into online child sexual exploitation.

CAID uses the latest technology to transform how law enforcement deals with child sexual abuse images. It brings together all the images that the police and National Crime Agency (NCA) encounter. Forces then use the images’ unique identifiers – “hashes” – to improve how they investigate these crimes and protect children. All UK territorial police forces and the NCA are now connected to CAID.

The objective of CAID is to help identify and safeguard victims. It speeds up investigating online child sexual exploitation and supports global efforts to remove images from the internet.

CAID can help streamline the investigation and prosecution of offenders and can protect children, including by cross-matching known images of abuse, held by law enforcement, with seized devices so that evidence can be presented more quickly. For example, prior to CAID, a case with 10,000 images could take days to review. Now, after matching images against CAID, a case like this could be reviewed

⁵⁶ Material related to the IWF image hashlist sourced from <https://www.iwf.org.uk/join-us/services/hashlist>. More detail available under this link.

in hours. More detailed information can be found in the booklet the Home Office published on CAID in 2015.⁵⁷

3.5 The National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP)

The National Crime Agency's (NCA's) CEOP Command (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account. CEOP protects children from harm online and offline, directly through NCA-led operations and in partnership with local and international agencies.

The National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime⁵⁸ sets out the threat from all forms of serious and organised crime affecting the UK, including child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). This informs the National Control Strategy for all of UK law enforcement, produced by the NCA, which designates child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) as one of the five national priorities for response.

The multi-agency strategic governance group for CSEA, chaired by the Director of CEOP, produces a strategic action plan to describe the activity to be undertaken by all partners to mitigate the threat and risk from CSEA. This activity is across the four Ps (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) of the Government's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. Through this, the Director General of the NCA discharges her duty to secure an effective and efficient response to the threat from CSEA. The NSPCC and other organisations are key partners in these governance arrangements.

The NCA run a "Thinkuknow programme"; 1,522,201 primary and 1,922,913 secondary children received face-to-face education sessions from Thinkuknow's network of more than 130,000 professionals in the year ending March 2016. Thinkuknow's educational resources, including films, cartoons, lesson plans and websites, educate children about keeping themselves safe from sexual abuse and exploitation online and offline.⁵⁹

57 Home Office (2015) *The Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478006/4817_CAID_Booklet_v13_online4.pdf (accessed 1 September 2016).

58 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2016 <http://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/731-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2016/file> (accessed 4 October 2016)

59 NCA *Annual Report and Annual Accounts 2015/16*, page 18 www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/715-national-crime-agency-annual-report-and-accounts-2015-16/file

In September 2015 the CEOP Command launched ParentInfo – a website and newsfeed providing up-to-date and expert advice for parents and carers which schools can host on their own websites. ParentInfo provides articles across a wide range of issues which aim to help parents increase their children’s resilience to risk. By year end, 2,755 schools had signed up for the free service.⁶⁰

Figures published in December 2015 on operational progress by the NCA and police forces in one specific coordinated operation had identified nearly 700 potential online child sexual abuse image offenders. These results were achieved through a combination of more consistent prioritising, increased investment in capability, and the mainstreaming of a coordinated and proactive national approach. The activity led to the arrests of more than 680 people nationally, on suspicion of accessing indecent images of children online in the previous nine months, 104 of whom were in positions of trust. Nearly 400 children were safeguarded. This work continues.⁶¹

By the end of the year, the NCA’s Child Sexual Exploitation Referral Bureau was receiving more than 1,800 referrals per month of indecent images of children, indecent chat and videos primarily from industry, compared with 400 per month in 2010. This year the bureau received 22,606 referrals in total, 19,788 of which were from industry. The NCA continued to triage and attempt to exploit fully all information and intelligence received relating to child sexual exploitation in order, where possible, to identify offenders and safeguard children at risk. It made more than 4,100 disseminations to police forces in the same period.⁶²

This year the NCA’s CEOP Command supported 30 countries in building their capacity and capability to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse. Sharing an understanding of the threat, providing training for law enforcement in tools and techniques to identify victims and offenders, and holding awareness-raising events for child protection professionals enhanced international cooperation on child sexual exploitation and abuse investigations. This support also ensured that these countries were better equipped not only to carry out investigations but, crucially, to provide the necessary support to victims.⁶³

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, page 21

62 *Ibid.*, page 25

63 *Ibid.*, page 25

As outlined above, NCA CEOP engage in a range of activity that protects children from harm offline and online, directly through NCA-led operations and in partnership with local and international activities. At a UK level, the number of police-recorded offences of indecent images provides a useful part of the picture, as set out in section 2 of this report.

3.6 Lucy Faithfull Foundation: Stop It Now!

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation works across the UK to prevent child sexual abuse. It runs many projects, including Stop It Now! UK and Ireland.

Stop It Now! activities include:

- running the Stop It Now! helpline, a confidential and anonymous service targeted at adult abusers and those at risk of abusing, including internet offenders; adults worried about the behaviour of another adult, child or young person; and friends and relatives of people arrested for sexual offending, including internet offending;
- running Get Help, a confidential and anonymous website that provides information and self-help tools for users of illegal online images and those around them, helping to change problematic behaviours; and
- campaigning and raising awareness including public education.

The principal target groups of the helpline are:

- Adults who have abused, are close to abusing or are worried about their thoughts or behaviours: to encourage them to recognise their behaviour as abusive or potentially abusive and to seek help to change;
- Adults concerned about another adult displaying worrying sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child: to encourage them to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour in those close to them and to seek advice about what action to take; and
- Adults concerned about a child or young person with worrying sexual behaviour: to encourage them to recognise the signs of concerning or abusive behaviour and to seek advice about what positive action they can take.

Additional target groups were included due to caller demand:

- adults concerned about a child or young person who may have been abused;
- professionals calling for case advice; and
- adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Over the year to July 2016, 82 per cent of contacts (phone calls and emails) were received from principal target groups. If professionals and adult survivors of child sexual abuse are included, this figure increases to 93 per cent. The data suggests that the Stop It Now! service has a high rate of efficacy.

The Stop It Now! helpline has been evaluated by NatCen.⁶⁴ The evaluation found that feedback regarding the service was overwhelmingly positive from all user groups in the study. Emphasis was placed on the nature and quality of information, and the skills, empathy and attitude of the staff (including their ability to challenge callers).⁶⁵ The evaluation found that the impacts identified by all participant groups in the evaluation aligned closely with the intended aims of Stop It Now!. Taken collectively, the effects identified in this research align with the strengthening of recognised protective factors that may aid in desisting from child sexual abuse. For more detail on the effects and impacts the evaluation identified, please see the evaluation document⁶⁶. Initial economic analysis has also been completed⁶⁷.

Demand for the service has been growing since the helpline launched in 2002.

- In the first half of 2010, Stop It Now! took, on average, 306 calls a month. In the first half of 2016, this figure had risen to an average of 740 calls a month. This is almost two and a half times higher.
- In the first half of 2010, Stop It Now! responded to, on average, 21 emails a month. In the first half of 2016, this figure had risen to an average of 119 emails per month. This is approximately six times higher.

The chart below sets out data on missed calls – that is calls that Stop It Now! were not able to answer, alongside total phone calls answered. This time series shows monthly data from April 2013 to July 2016, a time period of approximately three years. The graph shows that the number of missed calls exceeds the number of calls taken. Over this time period, this has been by a factor of 4.3 on average. So for every call answered, more than four calls go unanswered.

It is important to note that missed calls are not equal to the number of callers. There will be repeat callers trying to get through to a practitioner. Stop It Now! has recently invested in new software to enable the analysis of calls vs callers. This will give a much more accurate picture of demand for the helpline.

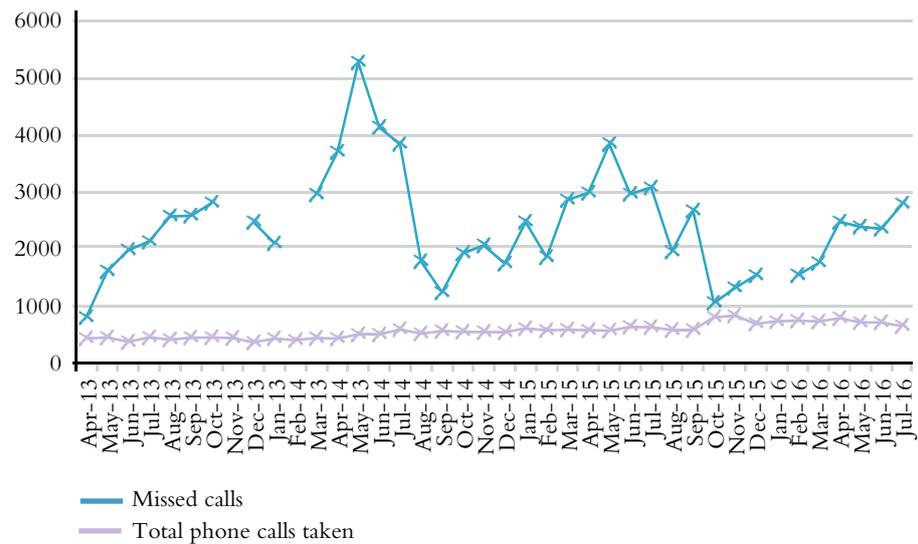
64 NatCen Social Research, Crime and Justice Team (2014) *Call to keep children safe from sexual abuse: A study of the use and effects of the Stop it Now! UK and Ireland Helpline*

65 *Ibid.*, page 5

66 *Ibid.*, pages 5, 6

67 Bowles, R (2014) Economic Analysis of the Stop It Now! UK and Netherlands helplines: Summary, Natcen

Figure 4: Missed calls



Data provided by Stop It Now!⁶⁸

The available evidence suggests that not everyone who is seeking help to deal with feelings they may have towards children and to change behaviour is able to get help.

Stop It Now! Get Help website, an online self-help resource is for internet offenders and their families has had substantial engagement. From the time the Get Help website went live in October 2015 until 31 August 2016:

- 14,544 unique users have visited the Get Help website from the UK (approximately 1,385 unique users per month);
- UK users of the Get Help website have spent an average of 9 minutes and 55 seconds per session, higher than the industry standard; and
- UK users have looked at an average of 10.58 pages per session, which is higher than the industry standard.
- The bounce rate from the site for UK users is just 35% – below industry averages.

For more detail on recent Stop It Now! Campaign activity, please see the Lucy Faithfull Foundation website under <http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/>.

68 There are some missing data points due to technical faults on the recording system.

4. What more needs to happen

There is a lot of activity in this space with a number of organisations working together to protect children. However, based on what children and young people tell us, from evidence on the potential scale of the challenge, there is more that needs to be done to tackle child sexual abuse images.

Analysis presented in the latest NCA intelligence assessment suggests that more effort is needed to tackle child sexual abuse images on the open web. A recent report argues that “Despite on-going work by law enforcement and industry to tackle IIOC [CEOP’s terminology for child sexual abuse images] on the open web it still holds a large quantity of child sexual exploitation and abuse content that does not require sophisticated techniques or tools to access.”⁶⁹

4.1 Addressing the availability of child sexual abuse images: the right to remove

There has been lots of successful activity, such as the IWF removing child sexual abuse images by issuing take-down notices and also through the development of image hashlist technology, which is increasing the effectiveness of activity to remove child sexual abuse images. However, children and young people still do not have a realisable right to take down images of themselves. This needs to change.

This is known as a child’s “right to remove”. This means that there need to be clear routes that enable sexualised images of children that have been generated by children and young people themselves to be removed at source. This process must be clear and accessible to children and young people.

This is important for two reasons:

- To provide and empower young people to take control and help reduce feelings of re-victimisation, and to help them seek out support and therapeutic care.
- To reduce the supply of sexualised images that exists. This helps ensure that these sexualised images cannot be harvested from their original upload location and re-posted on third party sites by individuals with sexual interests in children and young people; or used to desensitise, groom or exploit children and young people for the purpose of generating more sexualised images or videos.

69 NCA (2016) Annual Strategic Assessment Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 2016

In 1989, governments worldwide promised all children the same rights by adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁷⁰ The UK signed the Convention in 1990, and it came into UK law in 1992. All UN member states except for the United States have ratified the Convention.⁷¹ Currently the UNCRC does not reflect the digital and online world. The 5Rights framework⁷² was developed to offer a single, principled approach that could be used to set a standard by which young people are treated in the digital world. The 5rights framework is a civil society initiative, formulated by many individuals and organisations; from policy experts, academics, teachers, digital engineers, civil society organisations, business leaders and young people themselves. Over 150 UK based organisations are currently signatories to the framework.

The 5Rights framework⁷³ includes:

- the right to remove - every child and young person should have the right to easily edit or delete all content they have created;
- the right to know - children and young people have the right to know who is holding or profiting from their information, what their information is being used for and whether it is being copied, sold or traded;
- the right to safety and support - children and young people should be confident that they will be protected from illegal practices and supported if confronted by troubling or upsetting scenarios online;
- the right to informed and conscious use - children and young people should be empowered to reach into creative places online, but at the same time have the capacity and support to easily disengage; and
- the right to digital literacy - to access the knowledge that the internet can deliver, children and young people need to be taught the skills to use, create and critique digital technologies, and given the tools to negotiate changing social norms.

The NSPCC consider that these rights need to mean more in practice.

Specifically the NSPCC will be working towards making a child's "right to remove" a reality. Clear routes that enable sexualised images that have been generated by children and young people themselves to be removed permanently and completely must be made a reality. This process must be clear and accessible to children and young people. This is not something the NSPCC can do alone. Partnership working will be instrumental in making this happen.

70 <http://unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/UN-Convention/> (accessed 21 September)

71 *Ibid.*

72 For details see <http://5rightsframework.com/>

73 *Ibid*

There are a number of encouraging and relevant developments that could help this “right to remove” become a reality. For example, under the EU’s new data protection reforms, and specifically within the General Data Protection Regulation (which is expected to come into force in May 2018), there is the specific provision of “A Right to Erasure” (“right to be forgotten”). Essentially, under this legislation, an individual can request that his or her personal data be erased when they are no longer necessary for the purposes for which they were collected or processed, or the individual has withdrawn his or her consent to processing. Also, the right to be forgotten applies where the individual exercises his or her right to object or the data were unlawfully processed, where the controller has to comply with a legal obligation, or the data collected concerns a minor.

It is worth noting a May 2014 ruling (Google Spain v AEPD and Mario Costeja González) where the Court of Justice of the European Union found that individuals have the right to ask search engines like Google to remove certain results about them. The court decided that search engines must assess each individual’s request for removal and that a search engine can only continue to display certain results where there is a public interest in doing so. This shows that progress is being made on several fronts that deal with requests for removal of online data. There are examples to learn from and understand better. We are not starting from a blank sheet of paper.

However, making a child’s “right to remove” a reality is neither simple, nor straightforward. However it must be done. This is not something the NSPCC can do alone. Partnership working will be instrumental in making this happen.

4.2 Addressing the demand for child sexual abuse images

The challenge in the UK is considerable and arresting and prosecuting our way out of the situation is not feasible. Overall the evidence presented in this report suggests there is much merit in an approach to tackle this type of offending that moves “upstream” as much as possible and aims to prevent offending before it occurs, prevent it from re-occurring and to change people’s behaviours in order to deter and disrupt engagement in the viewing, possessing or distribution of child sexual abuse images.

The evidence from IWF data, CEOP, evidence from open web searches, the literature on file-sharing networks searches and also to some extent the evidence from children and young people relating to the self-generation of images, all point us in this direction of working more preventatively.

This includes working with offenders and potential offenders with the aim of changing behaviours, where offending has occurred, and to deter people from offending where offending has not yet occurred. It is important that people who have inappropriate sexual thoughts or behaviours about children are able to access support. The aim of such support is simple: to prevent child sexual abuse from happening and, where it has happened, prevent it from re-occurring.

In section 3 of this report we set out the evidence relating to the Stop It Now! helpline that operates in the UK. In summary, we have found that organisations like Stop It Now! provide an invaluable, yet under-resourced service. We have identified that Stop It Now! needs further support and resource in order to meet unmet demand.

While the provision of appropriate intervention for offenders and potential offenders is clearly important, it is important to remember that there are a range of individual, environmental, societal and situational factors that enable, facilitate and encourage this behaviour and therewith the abuse of children and young people.

In the “off-line” world, there is a developing evidence base relating to situational or place-based prevention of sexual abuse. Particular settings may present criminal opportunities because of the physical absence of guardians, or because the design and layout of the setting militates against effective guardianship⁷⁴. In practical terms, focussing on crime settings allows crime prevention resources and activities to be directed to specific crimes in specific places. This is a very different approach from offender-centred approaches that seek to reduce general criminal propensities (or more specific sexual proclivities) in individual offenders. Situational or place-based crime prevention aims to make specific places safer for everyone who encounters them, rather than to make selected individuals less prone to committing crimes⁷⁵. An important question that needs to be addressed is therefore – how can we make our online environment less likely to provide the opportunity for viewing and sharing child sexual abuse images?

Further research is required to understand how we make our online environment less likely to provide the opportunity for viewing and sharing child sexual abuse images. We need a deeper, actionable understanding of what can prevent offending behaviour – and this includes insights relating to the individual and insights relating to the online environment.

74 Smallbone, S., & McKillop, N. (in press). Child sexual abuse: A place-based approach. In Y. Smaal & M. Finnane (Eds.). *The sexual abuse of children: Recognition and redress*. Melbourne: Monash University Press.

75 *Ibid.*

5. The next steps on prevention: a focus on the drivers of demand for child sexual abuse images

There is no evidence to suggest that the number of people in the UK who wish to, and do, engage with child sexual abuse images online is fixed and cannot change. And from what we know about other forms of child abuse, there is every reason to think that we can reduce the number of people who abuse children in this way by getting a better understanding of the drivers of their behaviour.

We'll take one example of how the internet can create an environment in which child abuse becomes more likely, rather than less likely. There is a journey that can lead from viewing pornography with young-looking models ("teen" pornography) to viewing illegal child sexual abuse images. We can and should intervene to disrupt this journey. Viewers of pornography have been found to go through a three-stage cycle of addiction, escalation and desensitisation; requiring viewers to look for more extreme content to maintain their sexual highs.⁷⁶ The quotes below from convicted offenders of online child abuse demonstrate this in relation to "teen" porn:

I would go having a look at the teenage sites and then these teenage sites would point you to younger things and then it would say like illegal site... you'd think "oh, what's that"... you'd have a look at the site and the girls are obviously getting younger and it was a steady downward trend.

I was actually getting quite bored...with the sort of child pornography... I was becoming sort of obsessed with bondage... and sort of torture.⁷⁷

It is for this reason that teen porn is referred to as a "*low-stakes primer*" into the world of child sexual abuse images.⁷⁸

76 Cline, V. (2001) *Pornography's Effects on Adults and Children, Morality in Media*.

77 Quayle, E. and Taylor, M. (2002) *Child Pornography and the Internet: Perpetuating a Cycle of Abuse*, *Deviant Behaviour: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 23: 331–361, p. 343.

78 Dines, G. (2010) *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality*, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 158–159.

We believe that this grey area between illegal child abuse images and legal adult content featuring young adults needs attention, so that we can divert people from going from “low stakes primers” to very high stakes abuse.

PornHub, one of the world’s most popular porn sites, reported in 2015 that “teen” was the second most popular pornography category that the site users were searching for. In 2014 this term had been the most popular search term globally. UK viewers make up the second largest nationality of PornHub viewers⁷⁹. There were also other search terms in the top 15 searches, such as “stepmum and son” and “step sister” that suggest an interest in young-looking porn actors⁸⁰.

In the UK the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) classifies films, trailers and advertisements on behalf of local authorities who licence cinemas and video works under the Video Recordings Act 1984. The BBFC Guidelines set out categorisation standards that will be familiar to readers of this report – U, PG, 15, 18 etc. There is also a category called R18, which is for material that is to be shown only in specially licenced cinemas, or supplied only in licenced sex shops, and to adults only. Not all content is acceptable for an R18 film, trailer or advertisement – specifically the guidelines state that material (including dialogue) likely to encourage an interest in sexually abusive activity which may include adults role-playing as non-adults is not acceptable⁸¹.

It is important to note that video content that is distributed over the internet is classified by the BBFC, but this is under a voluntary, self-regulatory service. The BBFC also classify commercial and internet content distributed via mobile networks under a similar voluntary self-regulatory service. Put simply, online, different rules apply.

Working on the basis that the porn star actors are all aged 18 or over, the content, if online, is not illegal in the UK. This content is therefore, in legal terms, “teen” pornography and not a child sexual abuse image.

It is important to note, that such material would not be acceptable for an R18 rating in the offline world. That means it could not be shown in specially licensed cinemas or sold in sex shops to adults only. The BBFC consider such content to be not acceptable .

79 www.pornhub.com/insights (accessed 4 October 2016)

80 Ibid

81 BBFC Classification Guidelines, p24, http://www.bfcc.co.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/BBFC%20Classification%20Guidelines%202014_5.pdf

There is evidence that suggests that there are UK viewers of “teen” pornography online. Overall, this is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed.

There is, currently, an imbalance between how child sexual abuse material is considered in the online world versus the offline world and we believe this imbalance needs to be rectified.

We think that the rules that apply online, or lack thereof, are fuelling the demand for child sexual abuse images. This must change. As a society, we cannot tolerate adults engaging in role-play as children for the sexual gratification of other adults. This material is illegal offline and therefore must therefore also be illegal online.

As a society we have a choice whether we fuel the demand for child sexual abuse images or whether we seek to curtail it. Our choices, as a society, on what we consider to be acceptable can help tackle this challenge.

6. Conclusion

This report has set out what child sexual abuse images are and why they are a problem; it has summarised on-going activity to tackle child sexual abuse images, and also has outlined what more needs to happen. In our assessment we identified a number of different lenses through which we need to look in order to understand the scale of the challenge facing society with regard to child sexual abuse images. By doing this, we have drawn together, in a new way, the available evidence on the scale of the challenge. If we use the international research and apply it here, to arrive at a UK estimate, the possible scale of this challenge in the UK is sobering. Crucially, we believe that there is sufficient evidence that points clearly to the need for further action now, as we have detailed in chapters four and five of this report.

As set out above there is already fruitful collaboration between industry, government, law enforcement and the third sector. Encouragingly, the right agencies and organisations are working together towards a common goal. Work is happening at national and international levels. Global initiatives such as the WeProtect Global Alliance are extremely important as this challenge transcends our national borders. It is imperative that the UK Government continues to play an integral role in global initiatives.

We need to continue to work together if the UK is to remain one of the toughest countries in the world in which to view, share or produce child sexual abuse images. We have identified a number of areas where progress can be made now. As a charity that has the protection of children at its core, the NSPCC will be working towards making a child's "right to remove" a reality. Clear routes that enable sexualised images that have been generated by children and young people themselves to be removed permanently and completely must be made a reality. This process must be clear and accessible to children and young people. This is not something that the NSPCC can do alone. Partnership working will be instrumental in making this happen.

The research presented in this report is international and limited in scale, as there is no UK-based population level research in this space. On-going work by the National Crime Agency must be supported by the sharing of data and information by agencies, including industry, so that we use existing information to create a better and more accurate understanding of how we do more to tackle the problem, across both supply and demand.

In writing this report, we have pulled together many different available data sources. While there are a large number of players working towards the same goal, it has not always been straightforward to source relevant data relating to what measures work and what

measures work less well. For example Google and Microsoft both took further steps to block web searches for child sexual abuse by removing this content from search indices in November 2013. It has not been possible to fully gauge what kind of impact these actions have had. Google has not been able to share up-to-date data; the latest data dates to January 2015. Microsoft has not been able to share any data to show the effect the measures taken in November 2013 have had. If we are going to work towards the goal of ending the viewing and sharing of child sexual abuse images, sharing information about what measures work, what measures are less effective cannot be optional. Without transparency about what our activities and initiatives achieve progress cannot be made as quickly as it needs to be.

Further research is required to understand how we can make our online environment less likely to provide the opportunity for viewing and sharing child sexual abuse images. We need a deeper, actionable understanding of what can prevent offending behaviour – this includes insights relating to the individual and insights relating to the online environment. The NSPCC is making a contribution by funding and commissioning research into what stops possible offenders from viewing images. But this alone is not enough and others must join efforts to contribute to the evidence base, to reduce both supply, and demand.

Our law enforcement agencies work hard to bring perpetrators to justice every day and we must continue to support their crucial work. Yet it is clear, from the scale of the problem, that we cannot “arrest our way out”. We also need to work with offenders and potential offenders with the aim of changing their behaviours. Organisations like Stop It Now! provide an invaluable, yet under-resourced service.

In the course of this work we have uncovered some areas that cause us concern. There is evidence that suggests that there are UK viewers of “teen” pornography. The evidence suggests that there is a journey from viewing pornography with young looking models to move onto illegal child sexual abuse images. Overall, this is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed. Specifically the imbalance between how we as a society consider child sexual abuse material in the online world versus the offline world needs to be rectified.

But we also think in the long term we need a different approach – one that places emphasis on a minimum set of standards that industry must comply with to keep children safe online. We question whether it is sufficient for an issue as serious as this to be dealt with through a voluntary system of self-regulation. As a society, we have a choice whether we fuel the demand for child sexual abuse images or whether we seek to curtail it. Our choices, as a society, on what we consider to be acceptable can help to tackle this challenge. We need a national conversation about how we can better uphold the rights of children online.

Annex A

The Global Commission on Internet Governance has proposed a simple framework that cuts through the complexity. It argues that it is helpful to view the internet in four layers. The diagram below shows the four layers with a short description of what they contain and the actors involved.

Layer	What is in this “layer” of the internet?	Who are the actors?
Content layer	This layer is most visible to end users. The content includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• alphanumeric text (web content, email, messaging, books, Internet of things)• audio (music and voice calls)• pictures (photographs, diagrams, digitised art and illustrations)• video (user-generated video, video conferencing and streaming movies)• multimedia of all kinds (video games, virtual reality and internet of things environment)	Content is accessed and/or created by people who have internet access – nearly 40% of global population.
Application layer	Includes the software with which end users directly interact. The most prominent application is the World Wide Web. Also includes mobile apps, voice-over internet protocol (IP) applications, search engines, social media platforms and platforms for sharing user-generated content.	Applications are developed across the world by a wide range of producers across private, public and third sectors.
Logic layer	Includes technical standards such as IP addresses and domain names, as well as the domain name system (DNS). The DNS translates between the domain names that people use and the IP addresses that computers use to route information. Also includes internet standards, the common language for establishing protocols for how information can be inter-operable and exchanged among devices regardless of manufacturer.	A complex system of institutions allocates and assigns these resources and operates the underlying system.
Infrastructure layer	Includes routers, switches, transmission facilities such as fibre optic cable, Internet of things structures and systems and various other types of hardware.	Majority of this layer is owned and operated by the private sector.