



e-Crime Reduction Partnership – Online Child Protection

CEOP: UK/European Law Enforcement Initiatives

The sexual abuse and exploitation of children is often a hidden crime: 21% of girls and 11% of boys experience some form of child sexual abuse¹. In 2004 it was estimated that the cost of all sexual abuse was £8.3bn. Developments in and increasing use of technology, as well as cheap foreign travel have combined to create a step change in the way that offending takes place and the threat this poses to children and young people in terms of sexual abuse and exploitation. Twenty years ago it was estimated that there were around 7,000 hard-copy child abuse images in circulation; last year CEOP processed over 2,544,66 images and analysed 2,240 hours of video material. In this year's annual report from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), over three-quarters of the illegal content reported to the IWF featured child victims aged 10 and younger and nearly half of this illegal content depicted rape or sexual torture.

CEOP is a world leader in online child protection. CEOP employs a multi-agency approach, where the collective experience of law enforcement, child protection, and education specialists delivers a safer online environment for children and ensures a child-centred operational response. This approach is crucial to the success of CEOP and the delivery of a child protection response commensurate with the scale and seriousness of online child abuse in the UK. CEOP's Chief Executive is Jim Gamble, a serving Chief Police Officer who leads the Association of the Chief Police Officers (ACPO) portfolio for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation. Since its creation in April 2006, CEOP has become indispensable in the delivery of protective services to children and young people, and is firmly regarded as part of the wider UK policing and international law enforcement family. It provides the UK with a clear national and international law enforcement focal and coordination point for a global problem.

CEOP has achieved significant success in an ever-changing and adaptable technological environment. Its success lies in its multi-agency approach. Child protection specialists, experienced law enforcement professionals, and education experts deliver an integrated, multi-agency approach. The technical expertise of CEOP enhances protective service provision throughout the UK; and CEOP's flexibility facilitates the development of industry partnerships, enhancing the capacity of UK law enforcement to police the online environment. See Annex A for a list of CEOP achievements between April 2006 and September 2009.

CEOP:

- acts as the UK hub for sex offender intelligence, where reports of abuse are handled, investigated and disseminated to the relevant local police forces;
- provides specialist operational support to UK police forces and international law enforcement agencies, adding value and increasing the capacity of local forces to tackle online child abuse occurring in their force area;
- leading in the fight against child trafficking in the UK

¹ Cawson et al. 2000 Child Maltreatment in the UK: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect, NSPCC

- tracks Registered Sex Offenders who have absconded from the conditions of their court order;
- operates a Behavioural Analysis Unit, which develops offender profiles through expert psychological debriefing of offenders, supports UK law enforcement operations/interviewers with offenders, and provides professional training to law enforcement agencies involved in the management and investigation of sex offenders;
- delivers specialised training packages to UK law enforcement, and undertakes capacity building abroad, training police in countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and Romania on child protection issues, strengthening ties between UK and international law enforcement agencies.

The Virtual Global Taskforce² (VGT)

CEOP is a member of the VGT, a coalition of law enforcement agencies dedicated to child protection and tackling the proliferation of images of the sexual abuse of children. The VGT have successfully implemented a coordinated approach to transnational law enforcement operations and intelligence sharing. By working in partnership, members of the VGT are better placed to investigate international networks of offenders.

The CEOP-led European Financial Coalition³ (EFC)

The EFC is an example of good practice in the development of a partnership between law enforcement agencies and other key sectors for tackling the commercial distribution of images of the sexual abuse of children. The EFC is led by CEOP, and includes Europol, MasterCard, VISA Europe, PayPal, the Italian National Postal & Communication Police, Eurojust and Missing Children Europe. The objective of the EFC is to facilitate and support pan-European police operations focused on child sex abuse. Cross-sector solutions particularly target the electronic payment systems that are used to purchase child exploitation and abuse images on the internet. By involving the private sector, the EFC can more effectively tackle this transnational crime.

Education: CEOP's ThinkUKnow programme⁴

CEOP's ThinkUKnow programme has been designed for children and young people aged 5-16 and those who care for them. Through a broad range of targeted resources, including educational films, lesson plans and interactive learning exercises, the programme aims to increase participants' awareness and knowledge of the benefits and threats of technology and the internet.

Over 14,000 professionals (including teachers, social workers and police) to date have been trained to deliver CEOP's ThinkUKnow programme, reaching over 6 million children in the UK. Majority-funded by the European Commission's Safer Internet Plus programme, this cascade-model delivers high impact and value for money. A recent evaluation of the programme demonstrated that participants are more likely to behave safely online after attending training⁵.

Working with ISPs: the CLICKCEOP button

CEOP operates the CLICKCEOP button. This is a recognisable brand, linked to CEOP's ThinkUKnow training programme, which functions as (i) a link to the UK's one-stop-shop for internet safety advice for children and parents, and (ii) the mechanism for reporting incidents of online sexual abuse to CEOP. By clicking the

² <http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com>

³ <http://www.ceop.police.uk/efc/>

⁴ <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

⁵ Davidson, J, Martellozzo, E and Lorenz, M 2009 *Evaluation of CEOP ThinkUKnow Internet Safety Programme and Exploration of Young People's Internet Safety Knowledge*, Kingston University

CLICKCEOP button, the user is taken to the one-stop-shop landing page. Here, the user can select the type of incident which has prompted them to click the CLICKCEOP button, from bullying to sexual behaviour, in order to access advice and support. By clicking on “inappropriate content” or “sexual behaviour”, the user accesses the CEOP reporting mechanism, where they can make a report directly to CEOP. This ensures that CEOP only receives reports relating to criminal activity – reports relating to cyber-bullying, for example, are referred to the best qualified agency. The CLICKCEOP button is therefore a direct link to UK law enforcement, facilitating an instantaneous law enforcement response to reports indicating that a child is in immediate danger. CEOP receives an average of four such reports each day.

CEOP works with ISPs to embed the CLICKCEOP button in online environments frequented by children. This is a “safer by design” approach, where law enforcement and industry work together to improve safety of online environments. The CLICKCEOP button deters offenders, empowers children to report threatening experiences to law enforcement, and reassures parents that the online environments frequented by their children are safe.

In recent months, CEOP has observed a spiralling trend in the number of reports received implicating social networking sites, the vast majority of which refer to Facebook. In the first quarter of 2010, CEOP received 252 reports concerning Facebook, compared with 297 for the whole of 2009. 43 % of these reports related to grooming, where an offender had attempted to contact a child with the intention of perpetrating sexual abuse. This problem is therefore escalating.

CEOP urges all ISPs offering services to under 18s to adopt the CLICKCEOP button.

Blocking

CEOP works with the IWF to block access to websites hosting child abuse images. Blocking is voluntary in the UK, and 95 % of UK-based ISPs comply. Blocking is a useful law enforcement tool - it discourages novice offenders and actively prevents the re-victimisation of children who are the subjects of the abuse. Those children have a right to know that all possible efforts are being made to prevent others seeing these images.

It is preferable to takedown such websites permanently, though this requires the cooperation of law enforcement agencies and the harmonisation of international legislation criminalising the possession and distribution of child abuse images. Where takedown measures cannot be implemented, states should endeavour to block access to such websites, whilst recognising that this is just one tool in a range of measures to be employed against this crime. Blocking can be effective in disrupting the trade in images by making life difficult for the organisers of such websites by removing the websites before purchasers can access them.

Status – Current Trends in Offending

Grooming and images of child abuse remain a major concern for law enforcement. CEOP has observed an increasing number of reports concerning incidents of grooming on social networking sites (hereafter SNS). ‘Grooming’ is a process of manipulation designed to entice a child into a sexual encounter, either online or offline, in which an adult slowly gains the trust of a child, lowering their inhibitions, and escalating their relationship with increasingly sexualised interactions⁶. Where grooming leads to an arrangement to meet, even where no meeting takes place, it is an offence in the UK under the Sexual Offences Act 2003⁷. Recent

⁶ Berson, I 2003 “Grooming cyber victims: the psychosocial effects of online exploitation for youth”, *Journal of School Violence*, 9-19

⁷ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/ukpga_20030042_en_1

research has demonstrated that 66 % of parents are worried about their children encountering sex offenders⁸.

Offenders continue to produce and distribute images of child abuse through peer-to-peer networks and commercial websites. CEOP intelligence demonstrates a significant shift by child sex offenders to the use of P2P (peer-to-peer) technology for the distribution of images. Distribution through P2P networks is the most common method of sharing and accessing child abuse images by offenders. By operating within networks, offenders normalise their behaviour through membership of a hierarchical community of like-minded individuals, gaining prestige by trading and introducing newer, more exclusive images. The production of new images of child exploitation is incentivised by access to higher positions within the network hierarchy. This type of behaviour provides a gateway to further offending, where images are made to order through ongoing contact abuse with children accessible to one or more of the network.

Images of child exploitation are increasingly being created in response to the demands of offenders with a predilection for children. It is clear that individuals who display a sexual interest in children have the potential to enact their fantasies in the offline environment. Focus must therefore be shifted from the conception of a child sexual exploitation “industry” measured in pounds or dollars to the networks of child sex offenders whose sole motivation is to share, gain access to, and produce new images of child exploitation. It is these networks that pose the greatest threat to children. In order to effectively combat the distribution of indecent images of children through P2P networks, it will be necessary for agencies in all countries to work together to infiltrate and disrupt networks and share intelligence pertaining to their members.

Increasingly, children access online services through mobile devices, such as smart phones. Many such devices employ location-based services, where the location of the user can be tracked and shared with others. The possibility of tracking people through mobile devices raises several child protection concerns, where offenders may be able to trace the movements of children⁹.

Annex

- Safeguarded 515 children and young people;
- Assisted with the apprehension of 821 suspects;
- Disrupted 205 high-risk child sexual offender networks;
- Created partnerships with over 23 private sector, government and civil society stakeholders,
- Through collaborative working with a range of stakeholders created a one stop shop for internet safety advice help and an online reporting system to allow the public to get advice from child protections experts on a number of online child safety issues, as well as direct action from police on sexual abuse or exploitation incidents, 24/7,
- Received 14,070 report of suspected incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation and disseminated over 10,000 intelligence packages to UK and international police and law enforcement;
- Achieved a 77% success rate in tracking missing child sex offenders on cases referred to it;
- Led international law enforcement efforts to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation, as a founder member of the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) – a collaboration of international law enforcement agencies committed to tackle this problem
- Led European efforts to tackle the financial aspects of the distribution of child abuse images

⁸ DSCF 2010 *Staying Safe Survey 2009, Young People’s Attitudes Around Accidents, Bullying and Safety*, Research Report DCSF-RR192

⁹ The Right Click: an Agenda for Creating a Safer and Fairer Online Environment for Every Child, eNACSO, 2010

- Undertaken capacity building in destination countries visited by British child sexual offenders, which has resulted in local action, supported by CEOP, to track, arrest and bring those offenders to justice;
- Empowered over 5m children and young people about internet safety awareness through its on and offline resources;
- Trained 9,242 child protection professionals; and
- Developed a network of over 40,000 volunteers to deliver its offline children and young people's programme