Making every child matter ... *everywhere*

A Picture of Abuse

A thematic assessment of the risk of contact child sexual abuse posed by those who possess indecent images of children

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

Foreword

It's often said you can measure how civilised a society is by the way it treats its children. For me, another measure is how well it protects them from harm.

This thematic assessment, the second in our series, addresses a new threat that has grown exponentially with the advent of mass internet access, and the new challenge it represents. Possession of indecent images of children is alarmingly commonplace. It causes multiple forms of harm, including the sexual abuse involved in creating the image; the further violation of the victim with every new viewing; the impact on the viewer and the contribution it makes to the development of other abusive behaviour.

So, possession of such images is a crime; and rightly so. But how seriously should society, agencies, and law enforcers take those who commit the crime?

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is the UK's lead agency for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Answering this question is important for us so we can channel our efforts to best effect. But it's also a question anyone involved in protecting children should be asking themselves. It affects how police forces and children's services prioritise their work; how severely the courts deal with offenders; and many other necessary professional judgements which add up to the extent of protection we give to our children.

This thematic assessment set out to explore the risk posed by people who possess child abuse imagery. We found some compelling evidence that anyone who possesses IIOC must be considered a risk to children. We also found that, in many cases, it was an online investigation that finally lifted the stone on years of offline sexual abuse and harm, which otherwise would have continued unabated.

This assessment will help people who make the key decisions, make better informed ones. It will help practitioners identify and understand the risks so that they can manage them. It may also bring home to a wider audience the links between online behaviour and offline risk. We hope that, as a result, our society will become better at protecting our children.

Peter Davies
Chief Executive Officer
Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

Contents

Introduction

1. This thematic assessment explores the risk of contact child sexual offending posed by those who possess still and moving indecent images of children ('IIOC')[1]. It looks at the ways in which this risk is managed by the police service and others involved in child protection and the criminal justice process.

2. In 1996 less than 100 million users worldwide had access to the internet compared to 1.5 billion people in 2010[2]. The volume of IIOC in circulation on the internet has also increased dramatically[3]. In 1990, Home Office estimates of the number of individual, hard-copy, IIOC in circulation stood at approximately 7,000[4]. As an example of this increase, in 1995 Greater Manchester Police (GMP) seized 12 IIOC, all on video or paper. In 1999 this figure had risen to 41,000, with all bar three images then held in electronic form[5]. Today, the number of unique IIOC in circulation on the internet runs into millions, with police forces reporting seizures of up to 2.5 million images in single collections alone[6]. The number of individual children depicted in these images is likely to be in the tens of thousands[7].

3. Trend analysis suggests that IIOC appear to be becoming more extreme, sadistic and violent[8]. In a comparison of two Internet Watch Foundation reports from 2008 and 2010, images depicting penetrative abuse had risen by 7.6%, with a greater proportion depicting the abuse of younger children. It is difficult to assess how many people are in possession of IIOC as it is a crime largely hidden from view. Work is ongoing within CEOP to assess the extent of this offending.

4. In partnership with the internet industry, law enforcement organisations are becoming increasingly successful at identifying those who possess the growing volume of IIOC in circulation online. This is undoubtedly a very positive development; however with finite policing resources it has led to a greater need for effective prioritisation by police forces in order to manage the risk that these offenders present to children offline.

5. This thematic assessment was undertaken with five principal objectives:

   ▶ To summarise current academic thinking and operational experience on the risk of contact sexual abuse posed to children by those who possess IIOC.

   ▶ To identify and outline the challenges faced by UK stakeholders in dealing with IIOC possession offending and the safeguarding of victims.

   ▶ To identify and outline options for risk-based prioritising of IIOC possession offending to help ensure that those who present the highest risk of contact sexual abuse are prioritised for intervention.

   ▶ To identify and outline technological solutions/tools that enable IIOC possession investigations to be conducted as efficiently as possible, and support the safeguarding of victims.

   ▶ To recommend technological, investigative and risk assessment solutions which can be deployed to assist in the prioritisation and execution of IIOC possession enquiries, and support the safeguarding of victims.

6. This Executive Summary outlines the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the full assessment, which is available as a restricted document to those within the law enforcement community. The full assessment is protectively marked in order to protect law enforcement methodology.

7. Police officers, staff and child protection professionals offer a unique and valuable first hand perspective of IIOC possession cases, the difficulties encountered in the course of their investigations, as well as insights into working with victims and the link to contact sexual offending. Case studies submitted by practitioners offer an insight into the identification of contact sexual offenders, the effectiveness of risk assessment and intelligence development around IIOC possession cases, the importance of prioritisation and the characteristics of offenders.

> "I feel like I had my childhood taken away from me, I wasn't allowed a childhood."
>
> Child victim of sexual abuse recorded in indecent imagery

8. CEOP would like to thank the law enforcement and child protection agencies that took the time to contribute to this document. Their input contributed to the development of a comprehensive picture of the risk that those who posses IIOC pose to children and how that risk is currently managed.

Findings Literature Review

Literature Review

9. The possession of IIOC is a form of child sexual exploitation that in itself requires no direct interaction with a victim. The crime involves having possession of images that depict children being sexually abused and exploited.

10. In the UK, IIOC have been categorised into five levels of severity based on the COPINE (Combating Paedophile Information Networks In Europe) scale. This categorisation forms the basis of the Sentencing Council (SC) scale, the classification which is used by the courts when sentencing for these offences and applies to both the online and offline possession of IIOC:

Level	Description
Level 1	Images depicting erotic posing with no sexual activity
Level 2	Non-penetrative sexual activity between children or solo masturbation by a child
Level 3	Non-penetrative sexual activity between adults and children
Level 4	Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children, or both children and adults
Level 5	Sadism or penetration of, or by an animal

11. The information that is available in relation to specific demographic traits of offenders who possess IIOC is predominantly in relation to online possession and shows some distinct demographic similarities across studies. Firstly, there is a clear indication that the majority of these offenders are male[9].

12. Ethnicity[10] has also been identified as a common characteristic, with the majority of offenders being white and from a western culture and some studies showing minimal representations of Asian, Mediterranean and Aboriginal ethnic groups[11]. Dr Ethel Quayle suggests that this "raises an interesting issue about sexually abusive practices and ethnicity", questioning whether these offender characteristics result from culturally defined internet use or whether they reflect differences in the relationship between different ethnicities and pornography or abusive image use[12].

13. There are a number of theories that categorise those who possess IIOC in an attempt to identify the particular drivers and motivations for their behaviour. Two of the most opposing theories put forward are described below:

   ▸ Offenders view IIOC as a result of having a sexual interest in children. These offenders use IIOC as a release that helps them to control urges. IIOC indulges the offender in fantasy, thus reducing the likelihood that they will commit contact offences against a child[13].

   ▸ Offenders who view IIOC are reinforcing 'cognitive distortions[14]' to justify their offending behaviour and desensitise themselves to contact abuse and the harm it inflicts on victims. Fundamentally, this theory contends that viewing IIOC increases the desire and motivation to commit contact offences[15].

14. One study found that between 77 and 87 percent of convicted child sexual offenders used IIOC to stimulate themselves sexually, to lower the inhibitions of their child victim, or to teach the child to replicate the activity in real-life sexual situations[16]. It can be inferred from this that the offender's exposure to IIOC can act as an instigator for future contact sexual abuse; suggesting that the viewing of IIOC has the potential to increase the risk of offenders committing contact abuse against a child.

15. The extent to which online offenders are a unique group of offenders or child sex offenders who use the internet as part of a wider pattern of offending is heavily contested.

16. Comparisons[17] between online and offline offenders in terms of demographic and psychological variables indicate that both types of offender were more likely to have been subject to childhood abuse than the general population. Whilst both types of offender can come from any age and ethnicity, demographically, online offenders were more likely to be Caucasian and younger than offline offenders. This age differential is likely to change in time as future middle-aged populations will have grown up with extensive exposure to the internet. Therefore it can be reasonably projected that this will lead to a greater dispersal of age groups using the internet to offend.

Findings Literature Review

17. In a study comparing image offenders with dual offenders[18], Long et al[19] (currently under review), found that dual offenders were more likely to have access to children, suggesting that this is a key factor in the assessment of an offender's risk. Such a finding also identifies opportunity as a key factor influencing whether an IIOC offender will commit a contact offence. This opportunity can be naturally occurring, for example the offender having children of their own; or an engineered opportunity, such as obtaining employment that provides access to children.

18. It has been suggested that online offenders are for the most part educated, intelligent individuals[20] who are well integrated into society[21] and successful in other areas of their lives[22]. It has also been noted that internet offenders are far less likely to be ostracised in their community after committing an offence than offline offenders[23].

19. Broadly speaking, the risk that those who possess IIOC pose to children has traditionally been assessed by the criminal justice system on the basis of the quantity and level of images held. Research has shown however, that these are not the most reliable indicators of the risk that these individuals may also be contact sexual offenders.

20. There is a wealth of research that illustrates various aspects of the correlation between viewing IIOC and committing contact child sexual offences. A meta-analysis[24] of research which looked at prevalence rates of contact sexual offending within different IIOC offender samples established a correlation of 55%. Where contact offences were determined by previous convictions, arrests or charges the percentage of IIOC offenders with contact offences ranged from 4.8% to 43%. These statistics were simply looking at known past behaviour as an indication of future offending. Furthermore, only a small percentage of victims report contact abuse which suggests that a significant number of offences never come to light.

21. Where contact offences were determined by self reports by IIOC offenders, the percentage with contact offences ranged from 32.8% to 84.5%. Self report studies in combination with an independent measure of honesty, such as a polygraph, may give a better indication of the risk an offender poses in the future. When a polygraph has been used to validate offender admissions of contact offences, the correlation between offences is 84.5%[25].

> " I won't walk on the street on my own because I'm scared other paedophiles follow me. I am scared because there are photos of me on the internet and paedophiles might have them."

Child victim of sexual abuse recorded in indecent imagery

22. A comparable volume of research addresses offender and offending characteristics. To the extent that it is helpful to draw conclusions from this disparate body of research it is clear that some contact offenders abuse children before they engage in viewing IIOC, some view IIOC to increase sexual arousal before committing a contact offence whilst others may view IIOC to fuel fantasy which may escalate to contact offending. Undoubtedly there will also be a proportion of offenders who, for a variety of reasons, will not contact offend at all. Although current research has not reached a consensus with regard to the extent of the link, largely as a result of the inherent unreliability of much of the data, each hypothesis in relation to causation has merit.

23. Whilst the motivation and risk of contact offending will inevitably vary for each offender, key themes emerge from academic research:

   ▸ There is a clear correlation between IIOC offending and contact sexual offending against children although causation cannot be established.

   ▸ Anyone who possesses IIOC poses a risk of committing contact sexual offences against children.

   ▸ The risk each offender poses needs to be assessed on an individual basis using appropriate risk assessment models backed by professional judgement.

24. The link between viewing IIOC and contact offending, identified but not yet quantified by research, highlights the need to consider each possession offender as a potential contact offender to some extent. Individual offenders may view images as part of a continuum of offending culminating in a contact offence, as a diversion from contact offending or as a result of experiencing a sexual interest in children. There is a need, therefore, to consider in every case what other offending may accompany the possession offending and where that offending may lead.

Findings Case Studies

25. A key consideration when dealing with IIOC cases should always be the identification of the victim of the abuse, discussed further in the latter part of this summary. The impact on the victims of abuse cannot be overlooked. The misconception that possession of IIOC impacts less on victims needs to be dispelled. The existence of IIOC indicates contact abuse is occurring somewhere and the victim is faced with re-victimisation each time the image is accessed, with the knowledge that their image can be repeatedly viewed.

Case Studies

26. From data submitted by 34 UK police forces, 97 cases studies were available for consideration in this assessment. These case studies were submitted in order to present examples of where IIOC possession had resulted in the identification of contact sexual abuse. They are not intended to illustrate the level of correlation between the two crimes.

27. Demographically the data shows that dual offenders are almost exclusively white males, and that the majority are aged between 19 and 45. In addition, those not in work, those working in schools or care work, and those in manual and manufacturing jobs make up the majority of the sample. It is possible that part of the prevalence of those not in work within this sample can be attributed to relatively high levels of internet usage amongst this group compared to the rest of the population. More research is needed to explore this relationship.

28. Employment data captured in this sample shows three notable trends. Firstly, professionals such as doctors, lawyers and accountants, are notable in their complete absence from this sample. Secondly, the largest group represented were those currently not in employment. The second largest group comprised individuals employed in schools and care work.

29. Data from other operational policing samples of IIOC possession offenders also contained low numbers from within these professions, although they were not wholly absent. The samples showed similar prevalence of those not in employment and those in occupations providing access to children.

30. Both the data gathered for this assessment and the IIOC possession data available from previous operational samples support some of the risk factors identified in academic research, namely opportunity, access to children and in the case of offenders not in work, social isolation.

31. Overwhelmingly, in 85% of cases, IIOC offending took place at home with the remaining offences taking place primarily in places of work. In a limited number of cases IIOC offending took place in public places with internet access, and in the homes of others.

32. In the majority of cases offenders lived with a spouse or partner. Of that group over half were living with children. In addition to those offenders who had access to their own or a partner's children, offenders also had access through extended family, employment, voluntary work, and via friends and neighbours. It is evident that IIOC offenders who contact offend are most likely to do so against children known to them. It is likely that this victim selection is determined to a degree on ease of access and opportunity. Whilst outside the scope of this assessment, the law enforcement community should also be alive to the risk that IIOC offenders pose to children through webcam facilitated online sexual abuse.

> "I am scared because there are photos of me on the internet that other paedophiles know what I look like, I don't know if they know where I live."
>
> **Child victim of sexual abuse recorded in indecent imagery**

33. From the 97 offenders in the study, 246 victims of contact abuse were identified. Whilst this provides an average of 2.5 victims per offender, in the majority of cases there is either one victim identified or more than 5 identified. Offenders accessed victims in a number of ways; however access through family and relationships was the most common.

34. In 90% of cases it was possible to ascertain the size of the offenders' IIOC collections. Sizes ranged from a handful of still images through to 2.5 million still and moving images. In the majority of cases offenders possessed the most serious forms of IIOC at SC levels 4 and 5. No correlation was found between the size of collections, the volumes of different SC levels within collections and the number of contact sexual abuse victims. This would suggest that investigations should

Findings Case Studies

not be limited in scope if the size and/or SC levels of IIOC collections found on examination are low. Whilst a high SC level may be one indication of contact offending, as stated earlier a low SC level image does not necessarily equate to a low risk offender.

35. The following three case studies are illustrative of the risk that possessors of IIOC pose in respect of contact sexual offending.

CASE STUDY 1

'B' is a white male living with his wife; he has no children. B was arrested for the possession and distribution of IIOC and a comprehensive analysis of his computer hard drive was conducted. Although the focus of this search was to identify IIOC, other indications of offending behaviour were found. Analysis of the offender's hard drive found 9576 IIOC, both still images and movies. 939 of the images were found to be at SC levels 4 and 5. In addition, information was found that suggested that the offender had sexually abused his nephew, and the offender also advised others on how to initiate sexual abuse. As a result, investigators identified B's nephew, aged 13, who regularly stayed with the offender. The victim was initially abused by B when aged 9 – 10 years old and had stayed with the offender most weekends. The victim also matched the profile of the offender's IIOC collection which was predominantly of male children aged 8 – 16 years. This indicates that had the offender not been caught the abuse may have continued for some time. As a result B was charged with both possession and distribution IIOC offences, as well as contact sexual offences.

CASE STUDY 2

'D' is a married white male, living with his wife and two children. D was investigated by police following information stating that the offender was accessing and storing IIOC at work. D was arrested on suspicion of possession of IIOC. Full forensic analysis of the computer found 146 IIOC, 4 of which were level SC level 5. The examination also identified notes in which D provided graphic descriptions of abuse that he claimed to have carried out on three children; his son, his nephew, and a boy he met as a result of online grooming. D had also distributed a number of movies that he had made of the abuse to approximately 30 people. On arrest, D admitted to 27 counts of sexual offences against children. He was sentenced to eight years and six months imprisonment, with a further two years on licence.

CASE STUDY 3

In May 2012, a father and son were convicted of sexually abusing two children that had been placed in the family's care. The father and son were arrested after police searched their home and found IIOC on a computer and digital camera. The father had been a foster-carer for some years and had numerous children placed in his care. Upon arrest he admitted a number of sexual offences against children, including four offences of rape of a child, two of inciting a child to engage in sexual activity and one of making indecent images of children. The son pleaded guilty to four offences of sexual activity with a child, five of sexual assault of a child and two of making indecent images of a child. The father told police that the abuse had begun after he took an indecent image of one of the children. The son also told police officers that he had begun to abuse the children after discovering the images that his father had taken. The son had also used chat rooms to discuss his child abuse fantasies. It is currently not known if any of the other children placed in the family's care were subject to the sexual abuse. The father was given a 10 year prison sentence and the son an indeterminate public protection sentence. The latter resulted from a report on his behaviour which stated that he had uncontrollable urges towards children.

Findings Practitioner Debrief and Workload Analysis

Practitioner Debrief and Workload Analysis

36. Central to the aim of this study assessing the risk that those who possess IIOC pose to children is an assessment of how police forces currently manage that risk. In line with the rapid growth of the internet and social media in recent years, CEOP has witnessed a growth in the number of referrals. Between April 2011 and March 2012 referrals into the CEOP Centre increased by 181%[26]. CEOP predicts that overall referrals will continue to increase year on year. The high number of cases requiring action by forces poses significant challenges to the police service. The need to prioritise IIOC cases in line with the risk posed in an efficient, defensible manner is likely to become increasingly vital for forces.

37. The data request for this thematic assessment focused on force workload data in relation to possession of IIOC cases. 34 forces provided responses to this section; however forces expressed difficulty in obtaining data in relation to certain questions. The first issue highlighted by forces was the variety of investigating teams that could potentially deal with an IIOC case.

38. 17 separate teams were identified as responsible for the initial receipt of IIOC intelligence. These ranged from the Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB), Criminal Investigation Department (CID) or specialist Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT). 71% of forces reported that a specialist child protection team would generally take responsibility for IIOC. However 48% reported that due to a lack of capacity they had more than one department that would take on IIOC possession cases. This demonstrates the delicate balance that forces are trying to achieve in order to provide specialist attention to IIOC cases in a resource-restricted environment, and the varying response that such cases may receive.

39. Specialist units or POLIT teams were not necessarily faster than other teams in investigating reports of IIOC possession. Such units came under increasing pressure, with large caseloads, covering a wide spectrum of internet crime, including cyber bullying and malicious communications. Due to the specialist skills often apparent in such units, cases were subject to greater scrutiny, increasing the time and resource spent to achieve the best results and outcomes for victims. Whilst the adoption of such an investigative process is admirable and correct, without increasing resource to meet increasing demand, this approach is likely to become untenable.

> "The investigation of Indecent Images of Children can be one of the only ways to find and protect children at risk. It is an important opportunity to identify and prevent further abuse."
>
> **DCI Matthew Long, Strategy and Risk Management Public Protection Unit, Kent Police**

40. Data obtained indicated a number of benefits for forces that could be gained from employing an integrated multi-agency approach to dealing with IIOC offences. This approach has benefits in respect of both victim identification and investigations into IIOC possession. Such an arrangement ensures that even if a victim does not disclose abuse, or this is not identified through the investigation, children's services will be aware of the concerns raised and can better assess the needs of the family and the potential risk to be managed. Officers reported developing an in-depth knowledge of the subject area, the risk factors posed and gained a better understanding of other agencies' roles by working in this way. This approach has the greatest chance of preventing frustrations between agencies and achieving the best results for children.

41. 26 UK forces reported a total of 2,625 IIOC reports received over the period 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2011. This is not representative of the UK picture in its entirety because not all forces were able to provide this data. Of those that did, due to the wide variety of entry points for IIOC cases in each force, not all cases were captured. The true figure is likely to be somewhat higher. Several respondents reported a lack of dedicated resources to analyse the IIOC reports data potentially available to them. If trends cannot be assessed and performance in IIOC possession cases not be easily monitored, the ability to differentiate high risk cases and suspects is reduced.

42. Data received from 17 forces identified 3% of IIOC possession reports where the offender had also committed a contact sexual offence against a child. This percentage should not be considered representative of the link between IIOC possession and contact offending for the data capture reasons previously outlined. The forces that identified the greatest number of contact offences from existing possession of IIOC cases had a formal victim identification process. This suggests that provision of a dedicated victim identification resource has a greater success rate in uncovering perpetrators of contact sexual abuse and safeguarding victims. This is currently not reflected in the provision of victim identification resource across the UK.

Findings Practitioner Debrief and Workload Analysis

43. It is significant that not all images found on storage media are reviewed and classified due to a lack of time and resource to process the large collections of images that forces now see. Consequently the chances of identifying new images and their victims are reduced.

44. Sentencing guidelines (currently under review) for IIOC possession offences have been published by the Sentencing Council. There are a range of sanctions that can be applied to offenders convicted of IIOC possession, from a simple caution to a custodial sentence. Generally a simple caution is regarded as an unsuitable disposal for IIOC possession cases. However the number of simple cautions used is increasing, likely due to the low number of custodial sentences resulting from prosecutions for IIOC possession. Over a three year period one police force found that only 18% of convicted IIOC possession offenders received a custodial sentence.

45. Forces reported that sentencing on the basis of SC level and the quantity of images was a particular problem they faced when dealing with cases of IIOC possession. One respondent stated that;

    '… The lack of understanding of the risk…and inconsistency from the judiciary, for example the definition of a large collection, with too much reliance on SC levels as an indicator of risk was an additional issue…'

46. A large proportion of those found to possess IIOC and to have committed a contact sexual offence had collections containing level 4 and 5 images. However, 11% of IIOC cases that resulted in the discovery of a contact sexual offence against a child did not contain these levels. Accordingly, neither the absence nor presence of level 4 and 5 images in an offender's collection can be taken as indicative of an IIOC possession only offender. A more appropriate indicator of risk to be used in sentencing may be to present elements of the risk assessment conducted by the investigating team. Risk assessment in sentencing was generally considered by investigators to be overly tolerant.

47. 21 out of the 34 responding forces used some form of risk assessment tool to assess intelligence received in cases of IIOC possession. These included the use of the Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT) or a similar set of standardised questions to prioritise caseload. Forces stated that the length of time between receipt of a possession of IIOC report and enforcement action was usually determined by categorising reports according to the level of risk that the individual may pose to children, commonly classified as high, medium or low dependant on the information available. The adoption of a risk assessment model may not only help forces manage the increasing workloads, but can aid defensible decision making in relation to the length of time between the initial receipt of intelligence and the enforcement action taken.

> "The victims know that with the world wide web this is never going to go away and I think that has the biggest impact of all and will always be in the back of their minds. I feel like we have saved them from abuse but the flip side of that is we have turned their lives upside down and in many ways their lives are not better than they were before but different. They seem to be continually abused but in a different way and I feel they will always be victims."

> **Detective Constable Charlotte Owens, Police Child Abuse Investigation Team**

48. Access to children was stated as a key risk factor in the data collected. 58% of the contact offenders (initially investigated for possession of IIOC offences) recorded in the case studies had familial, professional or accommodation associated access to children. When coupling practitioner and academic opinion on the significance of access to children as a risk factor for contact abuse, it is recommended that cases of this nature should be actioned as an immediate priority.

49. The fact that a number of forces applied this thinking in an informal way identifies that positive steps to prioritise are already in place to manage caseload. However the questions asked and answered in order to prioritise reports are subjective between different forces, teams and individual officers. Formalising a system of risk assessment would provide consistency and defensible decision making across, and within, police forces.

50. A key component of all IIOC possession investigations is the role of the High-Tech Crime Unit (HTCU) in retrieving, searching and analysing the information and images held on a suspect's electronic storage media. Forces consistently cited HTCU backlogs, the significant amount of time required to conduct high tech work and a lack of capacity and resource within the HTCU as an issue that prolonged the investigation process. This was compounded by the breadth of technology that can be used for storage, the number of items forces are now seizing and their storage capacity.

Findings Risk Assessment and Technological Tools

51. Forces stated that the time frame between the arrest of a possession of IIOC suspect and conviction could be up to two years. In this period, a common risk assessment methodology across child protection organisations would provide an opportunity for Children's Services to utilise the police risk assessment as an initial guide in managing the risks posed by the offender. This would support any ongoing risk management plans, in line with the processes of a section 47 multi-agency investigation.

Risk assessment

52. Having established that the risk assessment of IIOC possession cases is inconsistent across the UK, this assessment will outline existing risk assessment methods that could be used to address this.

53. Risk is the multiple of the impact of a particular threat and its likelihood of occurring. Within the field of child sexual abuse, the potential impact, i.e. the effect on the victim, must always be considered as high or very high. Therefore the variable that requires assessment is the likelihood, i.e. that an IIOC possession suspect will contact offend against a child.

54. Over the last fifteen years a number of models have been developed for conducting such risk assessments, with varying levels of academic and practitioner support for each. Whilst a potentially useful tool in investigations, such models have historically lacked the accuracy and effectiveness required for widespread take up by UK police forces.

55. Risk Matrix 2000 is a statistical risk classification process used with sexual and violent offenders, predominantly male offenders over the age of 18 years, post conviction. The model uses factual information about an offender's history to identify which offenders are at risk of reconviction; it is used to distinguish a specific group of offenders amongst those serving community or prison sentences, who pose a higher risk to the public[27]. Risk Matrix 2000 is better suited to post conviction offender management when a greater amount of information is known than for the prioritisation of IIOC possession investigations.

56. The majority of police risk assessments include the same critical risk factors for contact offending and a number of secondary factors. The only model currently used by multiple police forces is the Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT). KIRAT is currently the most rigorously tested and widely employed risk assessment tool for IIOC cases. It is available to all UK law enforcement agencies for a minimal licensing fee of £1.00, which can be obtained by email to kirat@kent.pnn.police.uk.

57. Whilst no model can be perfect, KIRAT provides a level of justifiable decision making, based on its validity testing and a standardised approach to risk assessment. It is used, and should continue to be used, as a tool to accompany professional judgement. It should also be remembered that KIRAT, and other models, should be used to prioritise case loads and not to screen investigations for intervention. All suspects of IIOC offences pose a potential risk of contact offending, irrespective of whether that risk is assessed to be low in comparison to others.

Technological Tools

58. CEOP is aware of a number of technological tools that can be employed in IIOC cases to increase the speed at which cases are progressed through high tech crime departments, to identify and arrest offenders and to enable the identification of victims of contact sexual abuse. The vast and ever changing nature of the internet requires law enforcement and the wider child protection community to be aware of new and emerging technology, its capability and storage potential. This in-depth knowledge would allow child protection professionals to both remain one step ahead of offenders and obtain the best evidence possible to enable conviction and the protection of children and the wider public. A strong message received throughout the data collection phase of this assessment was the passion and dedication that those who work on cases of IIOC possession and child protection in general, have for their role and the protection and safeguarding of child victims. This dedication is complimented by police forces attempts to think outside the box and develop innovative ways to identify and target offenders. However, this assessment has found that areas for improvement still exist. The appropriate resourcing and clear setting of priorities for forces in relation to this area is paramount in achieving those improvements.

Conclusions

59. Research has identified a link between IIOC possession and the contact sexual abuse of children, either prior to IIOC exposure or subsequently. Although a link between the two crimes exists, it cannot currently be quantified with absolute precision. A more in-depth piece of UK based research is required to assess and quantify this link.

60. For this reason, no firm intelligence or evidence that an individual has in their possession IIOC can ever be disregarded. At the forefront of all IIOC possession investigations should be the notion that any case may result in the identification of a victim of contact sexual abuse. This sits in line with Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004, which states that statutory bodies have a duty to ensure their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Risk assessment is therefore essential in order to prioritise the ever-increasing workload in this area of crime that the majority of police forces in the UK face. Police officers, staff and child protection professionals in this field require the ability to make defensible decisions to enable the prioritisation of their workload. This will ensure that all cases are actioned, beginning with those that carry the most risk to children.

61. A number of risk factors exist around those who possess IIOC. It is evident that the severity and number of images held on storage media are not suitable stand-alone elements upon which to base the assessment of the risk that a suspect poses and thus the enforcement action or sentence they receive. Although they may form part of a raft of indicators, other information, such as the most up to date risk assessment results, should be available to the courts for sentencing. Access to children and thus opportunity to contact offend is particularly significant.

62. Police forces and child protection professionals need to be empowered to make defensible decisions in order to prioritise caseload and there will also be a need to improve the efficiency of the investigative process. But prioritisation and efficiency improvements alone are unlikely to provide the whole answer. The identification of IIOC offenders through their access to images via the internet is currently an effective and efficient way of dealing with child sexual abuse in the UK.

63. The landscape of austerity coupled with the increasing volumes of work that child protection teams are faced with in the UK is unprecedented. In a perfect world all IIOC possession cases would be subject to a comprehensive, quick time investigation as soon as intelligence comes to the attention of law enforcement. However in a time where resource is sparse and priorities continually modified, this has become increasingly unachievable.

64. The Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT) is the most rigorously tested assessment tool currently available to forces and it therefore represents good practice for the prioritisation of IIOC workloads. The tool should be applied at key stages in the course of an investigation to risk assess cases as new information and intelligence come to light. KIRAT should not, however, be deployed as a tool to screen cases for no further action or considered a replacement for a thorough investigation. Neither should KIRAT be used in isolation to prioritise cases, but rather in conjunction with professional judgement. KIRAT itself is likely to continue to evolve, as more becomes known about the risks that those who possess IIOC pose to children and the public.

65. In managing the risk that those who possess IIOC pose, greater resource should be applied to the field of victim identification, in line with applying a victim centred approach to such crimes. It is clear that practitioners in this field recognise the benefits of such a strategy. They must be afforded the time, tools and expertise to include this as a key stage in an investigation. This should include a consideration of other types of evidence held on a suspect's storage media, for example chat logs and search terms. As the case studies provided in this assessment indicate, such items can provide a rich source of intelligence, complimenting IIOC evidence and identifying victims.

66. A principal problem for forces that provided data to this thematic assessment was a lack of centrally collated, accessible data. This was accompanied by a lack of resource to analyse such information to establish patterns and themes. Whilst the introduction of the Police National Database may alleviate some of these issues in the coming months and years, if forces were able to easily collate and interpret such data, it would provide a significant data pool from which to identify patterns in the risk of contact offending posed by those who possess IIOC . This in turn could improve force efficiency.

67. Data obtained for this assessment shows the benefits for forces that have an integrated multi-agency approach to child protection and specialist units to deal with IIOC offences with respect to both victim identification and investigations of IIOC. Although this may not increase the speed of investigations, the benefits in knowledge and understanding derived from joint working will give a greater chance of achieving the best results for children.

68. This point in time has the potential to be a golden age for child protection, but the evolution of technology is likely to make the internet an increasingly difficult place to investigate. The predicted dramatic rise in work volumes will require a fresh look at policing priorities and the resources allocated to this area of policing. Only such a review will enable all cases to be dealt with professionally, beginning with those that present the greatest risk in order to better protect the most vulnerable in society; our children.

Key Recommendations

1. **Further research is required to address many significant gaps in current understanding of IIOC possession offending and the link to contact child sexual abuse.**

   A key area for further research and analysis is exploration of the correlation between IIOC possession offender characteristics, such as ethnicity and occupation and the propensity to perpetrate contact sexual abuse against a child.

2. **Owing to the inherent risk posed to children by IIOC possession offenders, all information that indicates an individual has IIOC in their possession should be comprehensively explored by those charged with investigating such cases.**

   Each report that a person is in possession of IIOC represents a report that a child, or children, are at risk. At the forefront of all IIOC possession investigations should be the notion that any case may prevent the future abuse of a child or result in the identification of a victim of contact sexual abuse; potentially both.

3. **Cases where it has been identified that an IIOC possession suspect has access to children should be actioned as an immediate priority.**

   Access to children has been identified both in academic research and practitioner debriefing as a significant risk factor for contact abuse. It is of concern that a proportion of police forces are either unable to identify, or do not have, a specific target timeframe within which such reports will be actioned.

4. **Investigation, sentencing and offender management should each incorporate an assessment of risk beyond SC levels and the volume of IIOC possessed by the offender.**

   Reliance on severity and quantity of indecent images possessed by an offender gives an incomplete picture of the level of risk that individual may pose to children. This may wrongly influence decision making both during the investigation and subsequently. Other factors such as criminal history, motivation and opportunity to offend provide additional indicators of an offender's likelihood of contact sexual offending and these should be considered as part of establishing a wider picture of risk.

5. **Risk assessment of IIOC possession intelligence should be undertaken by all police forces using a tool such as the Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT).**

   Risk assessment of caseload is at best sporadic and inconsistent across the majority of the policing landscape in the UK. Police officers working in child protection should be provided with the tools to enable them to make defensible risk management decisions. KIRAT is the most rigorously tested assessment tool currently available, but it should not be used as a tool to screen cases for no further action or as a replacement for either professional judgement or a thorough investigation.

6. **A wide range of potentially valuable information, not restricted to indecent images alone, should be considered when carrying out a forensic examination of seized digital storage media.**

   This should include online account details, chat logs and web search terms in addition to image evidence in order to maximise the opportunity to uncover evidence of further offending.

7. **Police forces should make full use of Police National Database and other centralised databases to enhance strategic and tactical understanding of IIOC possession offending.**

   Alongside improved analytical resourcing, this would better enable the identification of trends and patterns in IIOC possession offending to improve our understanding of the risk factors and link between the possession of IIOC and contact child sexual abuse. This must be balanced with the appropriate resourcing levels to investigate cases.

8. **Police forces should adopt an integrated multi-agency approach to child protection as good practice in IIOC investigations.**

   Comprehensive joint working between police and children's services has yielded a number of benefits. Where such protocols are in place, officers reported a better understanding of the relevant risk factors and knowledge of how other agencies work, with better results for children.

Key Recommendations

9. **The investigation of IIOC possession offending should be a high priority for UK policing.**

An IIOC possession investigation should encompass a thorough analysis of intelligence, detailed examination of relevant evidence and a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances surrounding the case and offender. Adequate resources should be allocated to enable law enforcement intervention in respect of a higher number of IIOC possession offenders; a proportion of whom will be contact child sex offenders. This will lead to the identification and safeguarding of a greater number of victims of contact child sexual abuse.

Specifically, findings in this assessment indicate that:

» Specialist investigative police units should be created where they do not exist, to develop IIOC possession investigations.

» Clear priorities should be set for dedicated units to ensure that their specialist skills are not deployed managing other high volume internet related reports, such as cyberbullying, at the expense of IIOC possession investigations.

» Specialist units, including High-Tech Crime Units, should be adequately staffed and equipped to be able to manage their case load in a timely and comprehensive manner.

» There should be a greater focus on the proactive investigation of IIOC possession offending.

References

1   In certain jurisdictions IIOC is referred to as child pornography. CEOP does not endorse the use of this term as it is seen to benefit child sex abusers. It implies legitimacy and compliance on the part of the victim and therefore legality on the part of the abuser and conjures up images of children posing in 'provocative' positions, rather than suffering horrific abuse. Every photograph captures an actual situation where a child has been abused. CEOP's preferred terms are either Child Abuse Images (CAI) or Indecent Images of Children (IIOC). Throughout this assessment, where the term is used in, for example, an extract from an academic study, it has been replaced by the term IIOC.

2   Edelmann, R.J. 'Exposure to child abuse images as part of one's work: Possible psychological implications', *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 21.4 (2010), 481-489.

3   Carr, J. *Child abuse, child pornography and the internet* (London: NCH, 2003), p. 11

4   Home Office, *Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: The way forward* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2010), p. 6.

5   Carr, p. 11.

6   CEOP data

7   International Telecommunications Union, *Guidelines for Policy Makers on Child Online Protection*, (Geneva: ITU, 2009), p. 18.

8   European Commission, *European Commission wants stronger sanctions against child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child pornography*, (29 March 2010), from http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/379, (accessed: 16 April 2010).

9   Quayle, E., Loof, L. & Palmer, T. 'Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online', *A contribution of ECPAT International to the World Congress III against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents*, (Bangkok: ECPAT International, 2008), pp. 29-31.

10   *ibid.*, p. 28.

11   Baartz, D. *Australians, the internet and technology-enabled child sex abuse: A statistical profile*, (Canberra: Australian Federal Police, 2008).

12   Quayle, Loof & Palmer, pp. 28-29.

13   Elliott, I. & Beech, A.R. 'Understanding online child pornography use: Applying sexual offender theory to Internet offenders', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 14 (2009), 180-193.

     Elliott, I., Beech, A.R., Mandeville-Norden, R. & Hayes, E. 'Psychological profiles of Internet sexual offenders: comparisons with contact sexual offenders', *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 21.1 (2009), 76-92.

     Seto, M.C., Hanson, R.K. & Babchishin, K.M. 'Contact sexual offending by men with online sexual offences', *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23.1 (2011), 124-145.

     Sullivan, J. & Beech, A.R. 'Are collectors of child pornography a risk to children?' in MacVean, A. & Spindler, P. (eds), *Policing Paedophiles on the Internet*, (England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2003).

     Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K.J. & Ybarra, M.L. 'Online "predators" and their victims: Myths, realities, and implications for prevention and treatment', *American Psychologist*, 63.2 (2008), 111-128.

14   Sullivan, J. 'Criminal Insight', *Police Review*, 119 (2011), 20-21.

15   Bourke, M.L. Hernandez, A.E. 'The 'Butner Study' redux: A report of the incidence of hands-on child victimization by child pornography offenders', *Journal of Family Violence*, 24 (2009), 183-191.

     Carr, *op. cit*.

     Lanning, K.V. Child Molesters: *A Behavioral Analysis (Fifth edition)*, (Alexandria: NCMEC, 2010).

     Quayle, E. & Taylor, M. 'Paedophiles, pornography and the internet: assessment issues', *British Journal of Social Work*, 32 (2002), 863-875.

     Sullivan, J. 'The spiral of sexual abuse: A conceptual framework for understanding and illustrating the evolution of sexually abusive behaviour', *NOTANews*, 41 (2002), 17-21.

16   Showers, R. 'Research, public policy and law: Combination for change', in Zillman, D., Bryant, J. & Huston, A.C. (Eds.), *Media, children and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives*, (Hillsdale N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1994).

17   Babchishin, K.M., Hanson, R.K. & Hermann, C.A. 'The characteristics of online sex offenders: A meta-analysis', Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 23.1 (2011), 92-123.

18   For the purposes of this assessment, dual offending refers to the conduct of those individuals who both view IIOC and commit contact sexual abuse against children.

19   Long, M.L. McManus, M. & Alison, L.A. 'Child pornography and likelihood of contact abuse: a comparison between contact child sexual offenders and non-contact offenders', Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, (under review).

20   McCarthy, J.A. 'Internet sexual activity: a comparison between contact and non-contact child pornography offenders', Journal of Sexual Aggression, 16.2 (2010), 181-195

21   Endrass, J., Urbaniok, F., Hammermeister, L.C., Benz, C., Elbert, T., Laubacher, A. & Rossegger, A. 'The consumption of Internet child pornography and violent sex offending', BMC Psychiatry, 9 (2009), 43.

22   Elliott & Beech, 'Understanding online child pornography use', pp. 180-193.

23   Webb, L., Craissati, J. & Keen, S. 'Characteristics of internet child pornography offenders: a comparison with child molesters', Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 19.4 (2007), 446-465.

24   McManus, M., Long, M.L. & Alison, L. 'Child pornography offenders: towards an evidenced-based approach to prioritizing the investigation of indecent image offences', In Alison, L. & Rainbow, L. (Eds.), Professionalizing Offender Profiling, (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 178-188.

25   Bourke & Hernandez, op. cit. 2009.

26   CEOP Referrals Data.

27   Thornton, D (2007) Scoring Guide for Risk Matrix 2000.9/SVC.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
33 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London
SW1V 2WG

www.ceop.police.uk