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Intelligence Assessment

Annual Strategic Assessment

Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

2016

Date published: 16/08/2016

Reference: 0300-CSEA

Version number: 2.0

Authoring department/team: National Intelligence Hub - CSEA

Handling Instructions

There are no special handling requirements for this product and no permission is required prior to further distribution.

Key Judgements

- The scale of CSEA will continue to become increasingly visible. This will create greater demand on law enforcement resources and require a more sophisticated approach to combatting the threat.
- Although the visibility of the CSEA threat is improving, there remain significant intelligence gaps in relation to the overall scale and prevalence of the threat.
- The boundaries between different types of CSEA offending in the physical and online environments are becoming increasingly blurred with the expansion of information communications technologies (ICT).
- The adoption of ICT tools and services that allow offenders to access and share CSEA material in volume (whilst hiding their activities, identities, locations) is driving a requirement for increased technical capabilities in law enforcement.

Purpose

The purpose of the assessment is to enable the Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) Strategic Governance Group (SGG) to set its strategic priorities for the year ahead by describing the nature and extent of the CSEA threat landscape and how we predict it will change over the next 12 months.

Intelligence base

This assessment draws on input from Government, law enforcement and SGG partners, structured interviews with subject matter experts and knowledge gained from law enforcement operational activity undertaken during the last 2 years. The assessment is based on information collected primarily between August 2015 and May 2016.

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Introduction

Aim

1. The purpose of the assessment is to enable the Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) Strategic Governance Group (SGG) to set its strategic priorities for the year ahead by describing the nature and extent of the CSEA threat landscape and how we predict it will change over the next 12 months.
2. This assessment also informs the UK National Strategic Assessment (NSA) for Serious and Organised Crime and National Control Strategy which sets UK law enforcement priorities for the coming year. As with previous reports, the 2016 ASA also outlines significant gaps in our understanding of the threat in order to inform the development of intelligence requirements.

Scope of the Document

3. This assessment focuses on the nature and extent of the threat posed by UK-based offenders who pose a sexual risk to children both inside and outside of the UK and the sexual risk to children in the UK from overseas offenders. It sets out trends and developments in online CSEA offending, contact child sexual abuse and in transnational child sex offending and considers the possible implications of these on the future response to the threat.
4. This assessment does not comment on the response to the threat except in terms of noting where and how the response is influencing changes in the threat picture.

Information Sources and Limitations

5. This assessment draws on input from Government, law enforcement and SGG partners, structured interviews with subject matter experts and knowledge gained from law enforcement operational activity undertaken during the last 2 years. The assessment is based on information collected primarily between August 2015 and February 2016.
6. Some of the barriers limiting our ability to develop our understanding of the level of threat include:
 - Under-reporting of CSEA incidents;
 - Inconsistencies in the measurement and definition of CSEA within relevant research and agencies as well as varying official statistics in the different jurisdictions within the UK;
 - The globalised nature of the threat results in a lack of information about overseas offenders impacting on UK children and overseas victims affected by UK-based offenders.

Strategic Context

7. CSEA continues to hold a high public and media profile with national inquiries being established in Belfast, Edinburgh and London further raising the profile of CSEA. It is specifically referenced as a serious and organised crime challenge to the security of the UK in the National Security Strategy and has been identified as a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement. Public expectation is that offenders will be arrested and prosecuted, thereby creating a significant demand on law enforcement agencies and the three justice systems.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

8. ICT has an influence on the nature of CSEA and developments in ICT and the way it may be used by CSEA offenders have important implications for agencies involved in combatting this threat.
9. The internet has significantly widened CSEA offending beyond the UK's national borders.
10. The internet also enables offenders to make contact with one another across international borders to exchange images, ideas, fantasies, 'trade-craft' and, in some cases to jointly offend. This may increase the risk they pose.
11. The development of the internet and wider ICT has also made it possible for offenders to carry out their crimes in new ways, for example, through the live streaming of abuse.
12. The development of 'dark' networks¹ (such as The Onion Router (Tor), Freenet and I2P) on the internet enable those offending online to attempt to hide their activities, identities and locations from law enforcement.
13. The level of offending online requires that law enforcement agencies have the capability to appropriately and effectively collect, store and analyse vast quantities of data. For example, the arrest of an administrator of a website hosting CSEA material in the UK led to the seizure of his mass storage devices which contained 1.2 million indecent images.² The discovery of large collections of images resulting from offenders seized media is not an uncommon occurrence.
14. The technology used by law enforcement to capture, store and analyse digital CSEA-related data must also remain appropriate to developments in online offending. The expansion in use of live-streaming, and the resultant clips and stills that can be generated from a short film, further increases the volume of images available.

¹ See 'The Internet' section

Developments in the Behaviours of Young People

15. Academic studies suggest that young people recording and sharing with their peers sexualised images of themselves and entering into sexualised chat through ICT platforms ('sexting') is becoming a more normal part of sexual developmental behaviour that is not in itself, harmful. However, the ease with which such images can now be shared may make the subjects of such material vulnerable to extortion and possible victimisation.

Economic and Geo-Political Factors

16. Poverty drives the sexual abuse of children in some parts of the developing world. The relative wealth of many UK offenders enables them to exploit this vulnerability in both the online and physical environments.
17. Poverty and other factors such as war also drive high levels of migration, with the UK being a destination of choice for many migrants from the developing world and regions of conflict. Unaccompanied children arriving in the UK as part of this pattern of migration may be vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation once in the UK.

Nature of the Threat

Definitions

18. This assessment classifies child sexual offenders into the following three categories:
- a. adults who have, and are willing to act on, a sexual interest in children, or who are willing to engage in sexual practices without concern for the age of those they engage with, for their own sexual gratification;
 - b. individuals or groups who, although they may not themselves have a sexual interest in children, see the sexual interest in children of others as an opportunity to be exploited by providing children (whether in physical or image form) to others as a sexual commodity in order to gain advantage (financial or other) i.e view their child victims as a possession to be used as they see fit; and
 - c. individuals (who are generally themselves young males), in a street gang context, who view enforced sexual activity with other (female) gang members as a means of exercising control over them, establishing status within the gang or avenging the perceived wrongs of rivals.
19. Individuals falling within these categories constitute the population of CSEA offenders. We assess that there is some overlap between categories with some individuals falling within category 2 abusing children themselves for their own sexual gratification in addition to providing them to others to abuse.
20. Child sexual exploitation and abuse can include: physical abuse such as rape; sexual assault or other physical contact of a sexual nature with a child; grooming a child as a precursor to sexual activity; extortion to engage in sexual abuse via webcam, and making, sharing or viewing indecent images and videos of children (IIOC). CSEA occurs in both the physical and online environments.
21. It is current practice to view CSEA as falling into one of three types:
- Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) - online grooming, blackmailing to engage in sexual activity online, the sharing and viewing of IIOC and the live streaming of abuse.
 - Contact child sexual abuse (CCSA) - physical contact of a sexual nature (whether or not forced or coerced) with a child.
 - Transnational Child Sex Offending (TCSO) – Individuals with a sexual interest in children travelling across international borders to abuse

children. This primarily refers to UK nationals who travel themselves overseas, or are embedded overseas, and offend.

22. In practice, offending behaviour often crosses these category boundaries and the boundaries between the physical and online worlds. Online grooming frequently leads to the generation of IIOC and child abuse videos (which may then be shared and viewed by others) and in some cases to contact abuse. Contact abuse may also lead to the generation of IIOC and child abuse videos (which may again be shared and viewed more widely). This level of cross-over is particularly well-demonstrated in cases of live-streaming of abuse where the offender uses the online environment to effectively contact abuse by proxy whilst generating IIOC and video material. This blurring of boundaries is likely to continue and may require on-going refinement of the law enforcement response.

Scale of Threat

23. The scale of CSEA may be assessed from a number of perspectives:

- the number of offenders;
- levels of offending (volume of CSEA incidents including repeat victimisation);
- the number of victims;
- the volume and prevalence of CSEA material (mostly IIOC) generated by and used in offending.

To ascertain the scale of the problem all four measures need to be assessed concurrently.

Offending levels

24. We assess that CSEA offending is significantly under-reported to UK law enforcement or other child protection agencies. For example, the Children's Society estimates that in England and Wales, 50,000 16-17 year old females experienced a sexual offence in the 12 months to November 2015. The same report also found that only 4,900 such crimes were reported to police during this period. Consequently, the volume of offending visible to Government policy makers, law enforcement and other agencies involved in countering the threat constitutes only a proportion of overall offending. The overall ratio of visible to hidden offending and the overall level of offending is unclear. However, the level of visible offending alone is high.
25. Between September 2014 and September 2015, police forces in England and Wales recorded 38,546 contact sexual crimes, including grooming, where the victim was a child under 16. The number of offences against under 16's recorded in Scotland during 2014/15 was 2,067 (up from 1,815) and for Northern Ireland

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943 - up from 758 (although recording methods and specific offences set out in law in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland differ between jurisdictions). It should however be noted that a proportion of the crimes recorded by police over the twelve month period relate to non-recent incidents, that is incidents that took place outside of (in some cases many years before) the period in which they were reported. Consequently, the volume of crimes recorded over the period only partially reflects the level of offending during the time period specified. It is not possible to easily determine the actual level of offending.

26. Reporting of non-recent CSE offences peaked during the period between October 2012 and October 2013 following Operation YEWTREE, and although the monthly increases have declined, they continue to be a factor of the rise in reports of contact CSA offences.
27. In relation to offending in the online environment, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) receives reports of instances of CSEA activities from US-based providers of online services. The number of reports referred from NCMEC to the NCA relating to the UK was 139% higher than in 2014.

Trends

28. The overall volume of CSEA incidents reported to law enforcement has been steadily increasing over a number of years.
29. We assess that the increased level of reporting of grooming and contact CSEA crimes to police forces is at least partially explained by a greater public awareness of the CSEA threat and an increased willingness to report CSEA rather than an indicator of an increase in actual offending. Better recording of child sexual abuse following HMIC inspections is also cited as a significant driver of increases in the recording of sexual abuse cases - and in particular CSEA.
30. The University of Bedfordshire judges that a significant proportion of recent increases in reports of contact abuse cases can be attributed to reporting of non-recent incidents resulting from publicity generated by large scale operations.
31. We also assess that the increase in the volume of CSEA incidents referred by NCMEC is, at least partially, explained by an increase in the reporting by communication service providers (CSPs) to assist law enforcement.
32. We are unable to categorically state that the increase in reporting does not also reflect some degree of increase in the volume of incidents. Nor are we able to state the degree to which the increase is explained by a higher propensity to report rather than an increase in the number of incidents.
33. We anticipate that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse for England and Wales (IICSA), together with other national inquiries in Northern Ireland and

Scotland, will keep the public profile of CSEA at a high level for several years. We expect this to drive a continuing increase in the volume of grooming and contact incidents reported to law enforcement and child protection agencies, which will further increase the level of visibility to law enforcement of the threat. We also expect to see a continuation of the increase in levels of reporting from industry partners of incidents of CSEA in the online environment and a continuation of bulk reporting of incidents of CSEA from overseas law enforcement partners.

Number of Offenders

34. It is not known how large the UK CSEA offender population is, academic research in this area continues to develop and the NCA will work with the academic community to develop a more robust approach to assessing the size of the offender population. Investigation of CSEA offences by law enforcement will also continue to illuminate the size of the offender population as more previously-unknown offenders are identified.
35. The increase in reporting of CSEA incidents and the higher level of priority given to the CSEA threat has led to a corresponding increase in demand for a law enforcement response. This in turn has led to the identification of previously unknown offenders, thereby making a greater proportion of the offender population visible. In addition, the seizure of ICT devices in the course of investigations provides an increasing volume of additional information about further previously-unidentified offenders; in recent NCA operations, as many as 9 out of 10 offenders had no previous record of sexual offences against children. This further increases demand on law enforcement to respond.

Number of Victims

36. The overall number of UK-based victims of all CSEA is unknown, although indicators suggest that the overall number is high. The most robust estimates suggest around 5% of 11 to 17 year olds (1 in 20) had ever experienced contact sexual abuse in England and Wales (equating to approximately 220,000 young people in 2014). Among young people aged 18 to 24, 11% reported they had been a victim of contact sexual abuse in childhood (c. 1.3 million).
37. Most recently, the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (CC) found that approximately 50,000 victims of CSEA in England had become known through reporting to police and/or children's services during the two year period of their inquiry. Using these figures an estimate number of non-reporting victims was produced. The CC estimated there were an additional 350,000 to 400,000 victims aged under 18 who could have reported contact abuse but did not. The CC go on to use this 'tentative' analysis to say that police and children's services are only aware of 1 in 8 victims of contact sexual abuse.

Volume and Prevalence of CSEA Material

38. The volume of unique indecent images of children (still and video) available online is unknown. The International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) has stated that in 2014, 83,644 unique URLs (each URL could host multiple images) on which it had received reports contained sexual abuse material (up by more than 30,000 from 2013).
39. Details of IIOC and IIOC locations however are held by a number of different organisations and are sometimes not widely shared, meaning that the picture of IIOC volume and prevalence (i.e. the number of different locations at which a single image or single series of related images are accessible) is fragmented.

Implications for Law Enforcement

40. Each CSEA incident reported to a law enforcement agency carries with it the risk that a failure to act (to identify and safeguard/protect any children at risk and/or to identify and prosecute the offender) on information received could result in a child continuing to suffer harm that may have been prevented through law enforcement action. There is also a high degree of expectation that CSEA offending will be dealt with judicially.

Offender Profiles

Gender

41. Offenders in all types of CSEA are overwhelmingly male, although there have been a small number of isolated examples of female offenders involved in contact offending.

Range of Offending

42. The extent to which individual offenders engage in different types of offending is unclear. Academic research suggests that the percentage of offenders who view IIOC and also contact offend falls within the 12-55% range. The lower figure is based on conviction data and the higher figure being based on self-report data.
43. There are also indications from evidence found in a small number of cases that offenders involved in paying to direct and view abuse streamed over the internet in real time may also travel outside of the UK to contact offend.

Lone and Group Offending

44. Category 1 offenders (see Paragraph 17) may offend entirely in isolation; form online communities or jointly offend in networks.
45. An online community consists of a number of offenders who come together virtually through internet platforms, such as a web site, in order to discuss their interests and to share ideas and CSEA material. Anyone connecting to the community platform can see and engage in community activities. Communities

may be open, that is anyone with access to the internet can see the material being shared and the online identities of participants, or they may be closed to 'non-accredited' individuals. In some cases, the level of access to a community may be layered with open access at the lowest level and access becoming more controlled and membership more exclusive at higher levels. Individual offenders may belong to a number of different communities meaning that boundaries between communities may be blurred. The platforms hosting these communities may exist on the open or hidden web.

46. We assess that the majority of category 1 offenders who are involved in contact abuse act alone when engaging in these activities. The extent to which those involved in viewing and sharing IIOC keep themselves isolated from other offenders or participate in communities is less clear.
47. The number of individuals participating in open web online offender communities is not known but is likely to be high due to ease of access.
48. On the basis of the limited amount of category 2 type offending visible to UK law enforcement agencies, we assess that the majority of such offending by UK-based offenders is carried out by offenders operating in networks.
49. Some members of these groups also abuse the victims themselves to satisfy their own sexual urges (i.e. displaying behaviour reminiscent of category 1 type offending). This suggests that providing the children to others as a sexual commodity is an opportunistic means of making money rather than an organised business activity.

Technical sophistication

50. Offenders who operate online display differing levels of technical aptitude for accessing CSEA material, engaging with victims and hiding their activities, identities and locations from law enforcement agencies.
51. If offenders use hidden or encrypted services for accessing the internet for other purposes (such as browsing), then they may also use those routes to access IIOC.

Positions of Trust

52. Some offenders exploit the access they have to children through their occupation or other roles (e.g. running a youth club) in order to abuse children in their care. In recent NCA operations, 12-15% of offenders were in positions of trust. However, the general extent to which offenders specifically target these roles is unclear. There is some evidence that some TCSOs target specific positions (e.g. teaching English overseas, working with a charity overseas) specifically to enable offending.

Victim Profiles

Gender

53. We assess that the majority of victims across all CSEA types are female. However, males, although still the minority, appear to account for a higher proportion (almost a third of known incidents) of online sexual extortion than is the case with other CSEA types.
54. We assess that CSEA offending against males is under reported, particularly amongst older boys, due to a belief among victims that they may be stigmatised by the perceived impact of sexual abuse on their masculinity.

Age

55. Profiles differ considerably between victims of different types of CSEA. The general age range for victims of CSEA is from 11–17, but with a trend for more IIOC production featuring under 10's emerging.
56. INHOPE estimates 72% of all victims are prepubescent. However, the profile differs depending on the type of online criminality. Older children (13–16) are more likely to be at risk from online offending associated with sexting, while children under 13 are more likely to be victims of live streamed sexual abuse from the developing countries. Instances of live streamed abuse within the UK have involved infant victims. In SGII (Self-Generated Indecent Imagery) cases victims have to be of an age that they can use the internet alone and/or they could own a phone This is different from other IIOC generated by contact abuse.
57. The Children's Commissioner (England) suggests that the average age of victims of intra-familial contact abuse is 9.

Social Vulnerabilities

58. Information about identified victims indicates that victims of CSEA in general do not fall into a single social profile and that children from a wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds may be victims. The extent to which such backgrounds are a factor remains unclear.

Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE)

Grooming

59. The scale of online grooming by UK offenders and by overseas offenders against UK-based children is unknown and is an intelligence gap for development.
60. Offenders groom children online to meet two objectives:
 - to lure the child into a physical meeting with the offender for the purposes of contact abuse and/or;
 - to manipulate victims into abusing themselves in view of the offender via webcam and generate indecent images (and video) of themselves for the offender.
61. We assess the balance between levels of grooming for contact abuse purposes and grooming to elicit IIOC is changing, with the level of grooming to elicit IIOC and CSEA video increasing.
62. Offenders use different platforms to engage with children for grooming. The frequency at which individual platforms are used by offenders varies in accordance with the popularity of platforms among children and the effectiveness of management and monitoring systems applied by the platform providers.
63. Offenders continue to contact children via open social networks and then persuade them to move to more private forms of communication. Images may be created remotely and sent to the offender after the event or streamed in real time (live streaming) and captured by the offender.

Extortion

64. Offenders use threats to publicly post or send sexually explicit images of children to the families or friends of the victim to further victimise the child. This may be for the gratification of the offender or for financial gain.
65. Offenders may obtain the images used to exert control over their victims in a number of ways, with images obtained through online grooming being one key method.

Live Streaming

66. There are two distinct live streaming profiles:
 - commercial live streaming where a 'customer' pays a 'supplier' (an individual who is able to arrange for a child to be sexually abused physically – category 2 offender) to broadcast the abuse of the child via online streaming technologies in 'real-time'). The customer may direct the abuse as they watch.

- Live streaming among members of a network of category 1 offenders where one or more members of a network physically abuse a child and invite other members of the network to participate in the abuse (view and comment on the abuse and suggest abusive actions) as it happens without being physically present.
67. The 'customers' of commercial live-streaming are category 1 offenders, whilst the suppliers, victims and other participants (e.g. the people who commit the abuse when these are not the facilitator themselves) are usually overseas. Most commercial live streaming visible to UK law enforcement agencies involves facilitators and victims who are overseas.
68. Commercial suppliers of live-streamed abuse to UK customers may be networks or simply impoverished individuals with access to children (e.g. family members, friends of parents) who see the demand for abuse generated by 'customers' as a way to make money. The motivation of suppliers, whether by OCG, or individual, is judged to be purely financial (category 2 type offenders).
69. There is some evidence to suggest a two way solicitation process - whereby facilitators will actively seek out new 'clients' via adult sex show sites and other media platforms. The facilitator may be a relative of the victim and may emotionally blackmail these 'clients' to then watch child sex shows. In many cases there is an element of networking between offenders to establish contact with the facilitators who could provide the live-streaming of abuse.
70. The scale of commercial live streaming involving UK-based customers remains unclear.

The Internet

Hidden Services

71. The darknet is a small section of the deep web that is intentionally hidden and inaccessible through standard web browsers. Tor is the most well-known of the networks that make up the darknet, but there are a number of alternative decentralised networks available including the Invisible internet Project (I2P) and Freenet.
72. Within darknet networks, users run services anonymously which others can also access anonymously. Services hosted (e.g. websites) within Tor are called Hidden Services (HS).
73. The number of CSEA services within the darknet is assessed to be small in comparison with the marketplace for other criminal activities.
74. Freenet is free software allowing users to anonymously share files and chat on forums without any censorship. It is decentralised, with increased anonymity. I2P is an anonymous message-orientated network.

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The Open Web

75. Despite on-going work by law enforcement and industry to tackle IIOC on the open web it still holds a large quantity of CSEA content that does not require sophisticated techniques or tools to access. The content can be extremely graphic, however, it is not always easy to find, as sites containing IIOC are, on occasion, accessible only after clicking through various legal 'splash page' websites. We assess that the scale of IIOC on the open web is significant. The number of websites of where IIOC is accessible at any one time is undetermined.
76. It is possible that these sites are known to, and shared between, the online CSEA community. Some open internet CSEA websites have the ability for users to become members, affording them certain rights such as the ability to upload and comment. Some open CSEA websites can have hundreds of contributors and uploaders as well as a number of moderators, to control the material on each site.

Contact Child Sexual Abuse (CCSA)

77. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (England) has estimated that around two-thirds of all CCSA occurs in the family environment. CCSA also occurs at the hands of adults in positions of trust (such as teachers, charity workers, doctors), strangers or general acquaintances.
78. The high proportion of offending in the family environment is a challenge for law enforcement and child protection agencies, as the nature of the environment means that offending is easy to hide.
79. In addition, there are a number of factors that deter reporting of CCSA including:
 - fear that they will not be believed, a lack of opportunity to disclose, or a distrust of professionals;
 - the child is too young to understand that the abuse is wrong;
 - 'silencing' techniques used by offenders to maintain secrecy, desensitising children to the abuse, making them feel culpable so they do not talk to others, and lying to them about the nature of the abuse (e.g. portraying the abuse as an expression of love/ or as a reward/punishment);
 - feelings among victims of shame and guilt;
 - fear of reprisals against themselves or their family;
 - fear the breakup of the family unit, particularly in intra-familial cases;
 - older victims perceiving that the low number of positive judicial outcomes in prosecuted cases mean that there is little point in reporting;
 - a lack of trust in statutory services;
 - a fear of damaging 'family honour', among victims from some communities, victim blaming (for bringing the family into disrepute), and pressure to try to resolve the problem within the community. Families whose status in the UK is uncertain may also be reluctant to attract the attention of police/social services;
 - communication difficulties among children with physical or learning disabilities coupled with others ascribing other signs of abuse seen in their behaviour to their disability however, it is not known whether children with disabilities are over or under represented amongst abuse victims.);
 - a lack of sex education impeding the ability of victims to recognise abuse or rationalise that what was happening to them was wrong.

80. These factors place a greater onus on law enforcement and public protective services to identify methods of proactively identifying abuse.

Child Sexual Exploitation

81. CSE is a form of CSAC (Contact Sexual Abuse of Children) where the offender exploits a victim's social, economic or emotional situation and offers the victim an inducement in exchange for sexual activity.
82. The contact sexual exploitation of children in groups tends to attract high levels of media coverage but the number of confirmed cases continues to be assessed as making up a relatively small proportion of the overall UK threat from contact abuse. Most police forces report lone offending to be a greater threat than group offending.
83. A common identified model of offending is the 'boyfriend' model. Offenders present themselves as the victim's boyfriend with affection and gifts as well as plying the victim with drugs and/or alcohol. They then use this to manipulate the victim into participating in sexual activity. This applies to both lone and group offending.

Contact Sexual Abuse in Gangs (CSAG)

84. Child sexual abuse within a 'gang' environment refers to the exploitation of victims for a number of reasons including as a rite of passage, a means of control or a means by which to repay debts. A gang is a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people which sees itself (and is seen by others) as a recognisable collective entity, engages in a range of criminal activity and violence, identifies with, or lays claim over, territory, has some form of identifying structural feature, and is in conflict with other similar gangs.
85. In some cases children form a relationship with a gang member, and can become victims of sexual and domestic violence. Children may be given alcohol, drugs, money and gifts such as clothes and mobile phones in exchange for sex. They may be told they owe the group money, before being threatened and forced to take part in 'county lines' drug dealing. Some children may be willing to take part and do not consider themselves victims of exploitation, particularly when they believe they will be rewarded with large sums of money or higher status in the group. However there is an intelligence gap in this area as CSEA is often not the primary focus of the policing response to gang activity.
86. Within CSAG if a victim engages in sexual activity with one gang member it is perceived that they are sexually available and there is an expectation that they will engage in sexual activity with any other gang member. In some gang cases, sexual abuse is used as a method of revenge against a male rival, to 'disrespect' him by sleeping with his sister or girlfriend. The consent of the victim is immaterial as they are seen as a commodity.

87. The majority of reporting refers to the victims of CSAG as girls, however, limited reporting also indicates that teenage girls are also being pressurised into having sex with boys as young as 10 years old; to initiate the boys into gangs.
88. A study of sexual violence within gangs identified significant risks for girls who were directly and indirectly associated with gangs, who were the most likely to become victims of gang sexual violence. The study identified a number of characteristics that sexual violence within gangs shares with other types of child sexual abuse, as well as some distinguishing features, highlighted in the table below. Recently analysed data has shown a correlation between children who are frequently missing and the risk of sexual exploitation by gangs.

Table 2. Characteristics that sexual violence within gangs shares with other types of child sexual exploitation and abuse

Similarities between sexual violence in gangs and other types of CSEA	Unique Characteristics of Gang Based CSEA
The exchange for goods and money for sexual activity; as seen in group CSEA.	The use of sexual abuse to 'set up' rival gang members or disrespect them by sleeping with their family members.
The capturing of sexual activity in pictures and videos, which are then used as leverage over the victim; as seen in cases of OCSE.	The use of sexual abuse as initiation or punishment for gang members.
The abuse perpetrated by those known to the victims; a common feature of CCSA.	The use of sexual abuse to enhance the status of a gang member in the eyes of peers or to create fear.

89. Sexual violence against young people as a weapon within gang culture continues to be factor of concern in 2016. However, low levels of reliable data make the issue difficult to quantify with a limited intelligence picture nationally.

Erosion of Consent

90. Victims of group CSEA demonstrate that their understanding of their own ability to consent to sexual activity was seriously eroded, possibly as a result of their treatment at the hands of their abusers. This may also be as lack of education at school on this subject. Some perpetrators lead their victims to believe that agreeing to sleep with their 'boyfriend' meant that they could be forced to engage in sexual activity with their abuser's friends with no right to refuse. Perpetrators, victims and witnesses of gang-related CSEA may believe

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that a girl's sexual activity with one male destroys any right she has to refuse sexual activity with any other male.

Transnational Child Sex Offenders

Destination countries

91. South East Asia, in particular Thailand, The Philippines, and Cambodia, remains the region which produces the most information on TCSO travel due to continued international law enforcement focus. From analysis of NCA (CEOP Command) reporting the 4 most prominent countries with which known TCSOs are associated during 2015 were Thailand, The Philippines, Cambodia and India.
92. Law enforcement focus on this region has continued to drive our understanding of TCSO offending. Previous assessments have recognised that tracking Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) and arrest or conviction data alone is insufficient in assessing the scale and prevalence of the threat as these data sets only capture details of a proportion of the overall TCSO offender population.
93. The NCA has conducted an assessment of vulnerability of offender environments which identifies countries at risk of TCSO offending by UK individuals offending overseas. An assessment of 'pull' factors, that include poverty, corruption, flawed law enforcement, insensitivity to child rights and social inequality, highlighted regionally that South Asia, South East Asia, East Africa and Sub Saharan Africa represent the areas of greatest vulnerability. An increase in identified cases and reporting of UK TCSO offending in these regions lends support to the validity of this assessment which will be utilised to align response activities with risk.
94. The diversification of locations could be as a result of displacement from areas of South East Asia where countries continue to introduce more robust procedures to prevent TCSOs from offending. However it is more likely the case that international awareness and reporting of CSE has improved from a wider range of regions.
95. The extent to which TCSOs research offending destinations has been identified as a previous intelligence gap, requiring robust analysis of how perceptions inform travel and offending patterns. It is assessed that not only are TCSOs acutely aware of the factors that create vulnerabilities, they are actively researched by offenders when planning activity overseas.

TCSO Modus Operandi

96. Our understanding of the extent to which TCSOs put in place measures to hide their offending from law enforcement is low. However, on the basis of the intelligence available, we assess that offending is based on the perceived availability of the victims rather than the danger of the location, abilities of local law enforcement or severity of punishment. When law enforcement capability is assessed by TCSOs it relates to the likelihood of capture.

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97. A so-called 'How to' guide circulated online within CSEA forums advises others on offending overseas. The circulation of this document and the availability of this type of information for potential CSEA offenders increase the risk to victims in countries where these factors are extant.
98. Recent high-profile investigations by UK law enforcement agencies, for example the NCA investigation of Richard HUCKLE and Avon and Somerset Police investigation of Douglas SLADE demonstrate the level of danger that TCSOs can pose to vulnerable communities overseas and the severe nature of their offending which may take place over a long period of time and affect multiple victims. These cases also demonstrate the lengths to which offenders will go to integrate themselves into vulnerable communities and use their privileged status to build trust and groom victims for abuse.

TCSO Profile

99. Substantial proportions of TCSOs are in roles that offer preferential and regular access to children. There are few known examples of opportunistic offending - for instance - on holidays or business trips. Most offenders will use their skill set to embed themselves in a country for a time (teaching English for instance) in order to cultivate relationships and groom victims. Younger offenders may be using live streaming and so not travelling physically although the extent to which this may occur is an intelligence gap.
100. Offenders also exploit the weak security practices of some overseas schools and orphanages in Thailand, Indonesia and The Philippines. There is a perception amongst TSCOs that foreign volunteers are able to work in overseas schools and orphanages without extensive background checks and criminal history checks.
101. The International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) was designed to counter this trend from UK offenders by detecting those with previous UK convictions for CSEA and ensuring they don't receive a certificate, whilst simultaneously encouraging overseas institutions to make the possession of an ICPC a prerequisite to work. According to ACPO Criminal Records Office (ACRO); 15,064 certificates have been issued to date with these being issued to 1,443 institutions in 88 countries.

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