



Making every child matter ... everywhere

# Strategic Overview

2009-10

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre





## Acknowledgements

This assessment has been produced by staff in CEOP's Intelligence, Specialist Operations Support and Harm Reduction faculties, in consultation with our partners from law enforcement, central government, industry and child protection.

Special thanks go to those UK police force intelligence bureaux, hi-tech crime units and public protection units, who made the not inconsiderable effort to return data concerning online offences, trafficking, missing and travelling sexual offenders.

The Strategic Overview is also produced as a restricted document (available to UK law enforcement only). This version carries no protective marking and is available to the public and all agencies and organisations involved in child protection.

We welcome your feedback on this document and if you have any comments please contact us via email at [strategic.unit@ceop.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.unit@ceop.gsi.gov.uk).





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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aim, scope and purpose

This document will serve as an intelligence overview of child sexual abuse primarily in the online environment, offender behaviour and exploitation by trafficking. This Overview will not only provide an assessment of the threat posed by offenders, but also the environment in which they operate and the behaviour that puts children at increased risk of being targeted. The main themes of the 2010 Strategic Threat Assessment on Child Trafficking in the UK are incorporated for the first time within this year's Strategic Overview. In relation to child trafficking, current trend profiles of victim data such as nationality, age and type of exploitation will be examined as well as routes of entry, recruitment, control and coercion techniques employed by traffickers.

The aim is to produce a representative and comprehensive assessment of available intelligence in this area to understand the changes since the last Strategic Overview. This document will identify emerging trends and themes with a view to preparing for the wider issues that may impact on the forthcoming year.

## 1.2 Methodology

This Strategic Overview draws upon a number of information sources: national and regional material, assessments produced by UK police forces and their specialist units, data from within the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, its partners and other key stakeholders such as the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Child Protection and Abuse Investigation group. The United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA) centrally coordinated their response to the request for information and covers their intelligence and five regional enforcement sections.

Data collected from the CEOP Centre derives from reports of child abuse and exploitation submitted to CEOP via public and non-public reports and through knowledge built up in the course of our operational work. Assistance of subject matter experts contributes to the development of key findings and recommendations for each of the relevant areas within this Overview. The data contributed to this Overview was both quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. Given the general limitations of quantitative and statistical analysis in examining phenomena where all the data is not accessible, more emphasis has been positioned on the qualitative findings. However, where statistical presentation adds to the overall understanding of findings, this has been given.

Police forces across the UK were asked to submit any problem profiles that were completed in their force area in the last year along with any extracts from their strategic assessments in relation to child sexual abuse and exploitation in the online environment. In addition to this, forces were asked to submit crime and incident data for 01 March 2009 to 28 February 2010 for crimes that specifically includes the sexual abuse of a child and technology. Due to this year's publication date, the data collection period (end of year recording) does not correspond to those of our partners. It is anticipated that for ease of data collection the following year's Overview will collect data from 01 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

In relation to child trafficking, a covering letter, a list of child trafficking indicators and a questionnaire was sent to children's services departments across the UK and a number of relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

## 1. Introduction

### 1.3 Restrictions/limitations

Due to time restrictions, the collection of data has been limited. It is also apparent that there is still a much greater need for stakeholder involvement. Therefore in preparation for the 2011 Strategic Overview, a more specific and tailored methodology will be developed to secure an even wider range of source information and subject matter expertise.

As in previous CEOP Strategic Overviews, what continues to be clear is that the knowledge presented can only ever be based on a partial understanding of the scale of the problem due to the hidden nature of child sexual abuse. It is also well known that children themselves find it difficult to speak out about abuse. In addition to this, many online environments facilitate the secretive and hidden communication that supports grooming and abuse and do not, generally, provide easy mechanisms for reporting such as the 'ClickCEOP' button. Additionally, whilst some companies report suspicious behaviour or allegations of such crime to their local law enforcement agencies, which may or may not be passed on to CEOP, some do not report at all.

During the preparation of this Strategic Overview it has also become apparent that the recording of data of child abuse reports needs some development. It is not easy for police forces to distinguish between offline and online abuse in their crime reports. However, some forces are making headway in addressing this problem and it is hoped that in following years the data will be more easily retrieved. Whilst it has become apparent that a number of forces have experienced difficulty in extracting this information from their force IT systems, the current climate of cutbacks and scrutiny of finance has resulted in many forces not having the capacity to provide staff for this task. Therefore analysis can only provide a partial understanding and is not truly representative of the whole.

### 1.4 Protective marking

This report is classified as 'not protectively marked' although a restricted version of this Strategic Overview is available to UK law enforcement and relevant government departments.

## 2. Executive summary

In the year April 2009 to March 2010, CEOP received a total of 6,291 reports, 2,391 from members of the public and 3,900 from sources including industry, children's charities and law enforcement agencies within the UK and from around the world. It must be remembered that one report can relate to a single individual or allegation or hundreds, sometimes thousands of suspects.

The threat posed by those who sexually abuse and exploit children remains at a significant level. The threat is particularly prevalent when it focuses on those who are most vulnerable and it adapts and changes according to the availability of children in the converged environment and the ability to exploit technology.

Our understanding of this threat continues to be hampered by difficulties in data collection and recording, under-reporting and the complexity of the many and varied ways in which children are exploited and how these crimes are dealt with by law enforcement and the wider child protection community. Recording of child exploitation by police forces in the UK differs significantly and there are particular difficulties in identifying linked offences that take place in the converged environment, rather than remaining within either the traditional settings or abuse locations. What is universally agreed amongst law enforcement, however, is that the scale of abuse is potentially far bigger than that portrayed in the current picture and that there needs to be improvements in data collection in order to gain a much better understanding of the scale of child sexual abuse wherever it takes place.

The CEOP Centre has seen a significant increase in reporting from 5,411 reports last year, to 6,291 reports this year. The primary reason for this increase is a rise in industry reporting to CEOP. This in itself is positive and has been proven to provide additional deterrence to offenders. Through its work with industry, CEOP has demonstrated how effective reporting can significantly increase the safety of a specific environment and that the situational deterrent of both the 'ClickCEOP' button, combined with effective industry reporting that leads to offenders being arrested and children safeguarded, helps make those environments safer.

This year again sees grooming as being the most significant suspect activity reported to CEOP with the majority of suspicious contact being made in social networking sites, primarily Facebook, before grooming itself takes place, often in Windows Live Messenger. There has been much media coverage of social networking sites, primarily as a result of high profile child abuse cases. Evidence from police forces as well as from reports to CEOP suggests an increase in grooming cases linked to social networking. However, it is always difficult to tell whether there is an increase in such incidences or whether there is increased reporting as a result of heightened levels of awareness. The dominance of social networking sites is as much a reflection of their universal appeal to general users, rather than anything else.

 **The CEOP Centre has seen a significant increase in reporting from 5,411 reports last year, to 6,291 reports this year. The primary reason for this increase is a rise in industry reporting to CEOP.** 

As reported last year, CEOP and UK police forces are increasingly seeing offenders adapt to the converged environment and able to move between the different environments with ease, according to where children go and where the technology can be exploited. The way in which offenders do this can rapidly escalate the risk to a child and the way in which the technology facilitates this must be borne in mind by those investigating. The continued convergence of online and offline will present an ever increasing risk to children. This ease of operating in the converged environment is also leading to increased confidence amongst offenders which, when coupled with risk-taking behaviour of children and young people as outlined below, enables offenders to move from initial contact with a potential victim to committing abuse within a very short space of time.

## 2. Executive summary

Risk-taking behaviour by children and young people continues to increase and present a very real threat to their safety. Early sexualisation of young girls has been identified as playing a role in this but also children pushing the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in the online environment, without a true understanding of the risks, add to their vulnerability. This trend is corroborated by analysis of the images that have been seen by CEOP this year, where there is a marked increase in self-taken images of children and the majority of victims identified were from cases involving self-taken images. When added to the fact that we are now seeing a number of offenders using webcam streaming chat sites for their activities, this development is of real concern. In many cases young girls are being groomed and abused without ever meeting their abusers, with abuse taking place to order for an increasing audience of offenders. Additionally, the young victims are then being encouraged or blackmailed into bringing friends or younger family members to get involved in these online acts.

A range of services and responses are needed to address the issue of children who are exploited in this way. It is important that children can identify and understand the ways they may be engaged in exploitative sexual behaviour, why this should not be happening to them and how to get help. Children are particularly at risk in these environments and need specific programmes that help them understand the risks and how to keep themselves safe.

It also places a responsibility on child protection professionals, more than ever, to provide an appropriate response that focuses on the needs of the victim regardless of how or where the abuse took place. A traditional response split between online grooming and offline abuse is no longer appropriate, nor does it fit the needs of the victims. Children and young people who are abused in the online environment without ever meeting their abuser can experience high levels of trauma and distress and have just as much entitlement to a full and relevant response. Indeed, the implications of the proliferation of images and videos of their abuse can often mean that this crime has an even greater impact on its victims.

There has been a steady rise in the number of investigations referred to CEOP relating to women who sexually abuse children. Awareness of female abusers is increasing as a result of high profile cases reported in the media and shows a positive shift in professionals' thinking that challenges the stereotypical view that women are caring and maternal figures in children's lives and acknowledges that some may pose a risk of sexual harm to children in their own right. The increase in referrals suggests that law enforcement officers are more frequently considering females as potential perpetrators of child sexual abuse. What is clear in many of these cases is that, anecdotally, the women were found to pose a significant risk of sexual harm to children, with many displaying a tendency towards sadistic behaviour towards their victims.

The prominent trend seen over the last 12 months in child trafficking is a reduction in the trafficking of Chinese children into the UK. This is possibly offset by an increase in the number of Tier 4 visas<sup>1</sup> being used although further exploration of this issue is required. Despite this reduction, the threat from these trafficking networks remains significant and they remain the most sophisticated. These networks are flexible and adapt easily to law enforcement activity, thereby evading disruption. They use a range of coercion techniques and the children trafficked are exploited in a variety of ways although predominantly for sexual or labour exploitation. Vietnamese children now make up the largest group of children being trafficked into the UK, primarily for exploitation in the cultivation of cannabis.

<sup>1</sup> This is a type of student visa using a points based system to determine issue.

## 2. Executive summary

### 2.1 Key findings

#### Online abuse

- Data quality issues in collection and collation make assessing the threat of online child abuse and child trafficking difficult to define. An approach to secure a wider stakeholder involvement is required in the future to ensure that a broader range of data is obtained, to be able to accurately assess the national picture.
- Reports of online abuse into CEOP outweigh that of offline abuse. Online abuse includes webcam facilitation of exposure and image capture, however, many of those offenders reported for their online activity are subsequently found to be contact offenders.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook and MSN are the most widely reported environments where suspect activity takes place.
- Grooming is the most reported suspect activity reported to CEOP and includes behaviours such as inciting a child to perform a sexual act and suspicious contact.
- Distribution of indecent images is the second most reported suspect activity reported to CEOP and the majority are believed to be passed via peer-to-peer (P2P) sites, followed by commercial sites then social networking environments.
- There is an increasing trend in the number of self taken-images particularly of young girls being submitted into the Image Analysis and Victim Identification Unit within CEOP. Analysis suggests that children and young people are unaware of the risks of this behaviour.
- There has been a steady rise in the number of investigations relating to females referred to the Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) within CEOP. In many cases these women have been found to pose a significant risk of sexual harm to children, with many displaying a tendency towards sadistic behaviour towards their victims. The rise is also likely in part due to extensive media coverage in relation to female sexual offenders.
- Again, children and young people's risk-taking behaviour is one of the most worrying and significant trends noted for the second year by CEOP. Awareness-raising and empowerment continues to be a priority for CEOP. This not only focuses on children and young people but also incorporates the responsibility of appropriate adults within the home and schooling environments to make provisions for protecting children and young people online.
- Offenders continue to utilise developing technology and are quick to adapt to new emerging trends, such as private networks, to facilitate abuse. The use of smart phones with camera facilities and internet connectivity enable the offender to record live abuse, upload the images using online storage facilities and distribute them through their choice of platform.
- Offenders will exploit vulnerabilities within offender management systems both in the UK and abroad in order to continue abusing. This includes failing to comply with notification requirements and travelling abroad to countries from where it is difficult to extradite. It also includes those who are barred from working schools in the UK, exploiting the inability of foreign schools to carry out background checks on them.

#### Child trafficking

- The trafficking of Vietnamese children into and within the UK is the largest and most significant trend this period. Most were boys aged 13 to 17 exploited as 'gardeners', cultivating cannabis plants in cannabis factories.
- The number of potential victims of trafficking who go missing from local authority provided care continues to be a major theme. Vietnamese children compose almost two-thirds of potential victims of trafficking who go missing from care.
- Where type of exploitation was identified, 35% of children (76), most of whom were female, were sexually exploited. Eighteen per cent (39) were exploited for cannabis cultivation. Where age was identified, 72% per cent of potential victims of trafficking were between 14 and 17 years old (164).
- Victims were identified as being exploited or destined for exploitation in all regions of the UK.

## 2. Executive summary

### 2.2 Key intelligence requirements

Key intelligence requirements in relation to child sexual offenders. To better understand:

- offending behaviours in the converged environment, including how offenders target children and their selection criteria;
- the scale of the problem of the distribution of indecent images on peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms;
- how offender networks operate and to what extent are offenders networked and the similarities and differences between online and offline networks;
- the demographics of offenders and any links to specific offending behaviours;
- the motivations and destinations of offenders who travel abroad to abuse children; and
- the nature and scale of the criminal networks involved in the trafficking of minors.

Key intelligence requirements in relation to children and young people. To better understand:

- how children are using the internet and what they perceive to be threats and risks;
- what factors increase the likelihood that children will identify risks and report abuse;
- what makes a child vulnerable to exploitation in the online environment;
- why we are seeing a marked increase in self-taken images of children on the internet and what do children perceive as normal behaviour;
- to what extent Tier 4 visas are being abused to traffic children into the UK; and
- the scale and nature of the exploitation of children located in cannabis farms in the UK.

Key intelligence requirements in relation to technology. To better understand:

- the developments of new technologies, how these will be used by children and young people and what will be the impact on offending behaviour.



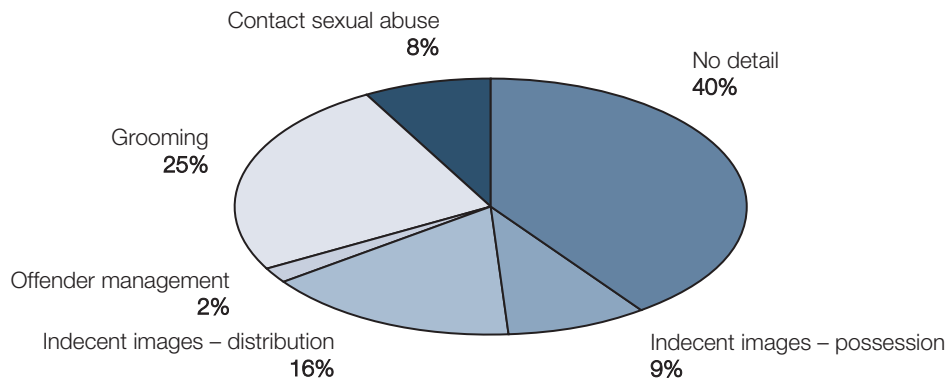
### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.1 Suspect activity

Of all 6,291 CEOP reports, both public and non-public, relating to suspect behaviour overall, we can see that grooming offences (1,536) represent the most commonly reported activity comprising 25% of all reports, with distribution of indecent images (1,005 reports) as the second most reported activity (see chart below).

The 40% of reports that are listed as 'no detail' refers to the lack of detail around 'suspect activity' specifically, as CEOP receives many reports that are unable to be classified by suspect activity on initial receipt of the report or where the type of report does not involve a suspect per se. For example, reports falling into this category include: reports where a child is threatening suicide; intelligence checks by police forces; information requests from the public; bullying and harassment reports; adult victims of abuse; threatening of violent behaviour; SPAM and SPIM reports etc. These reports do illustrate the wide and varied nature of the child protection related reports received into the Centre.

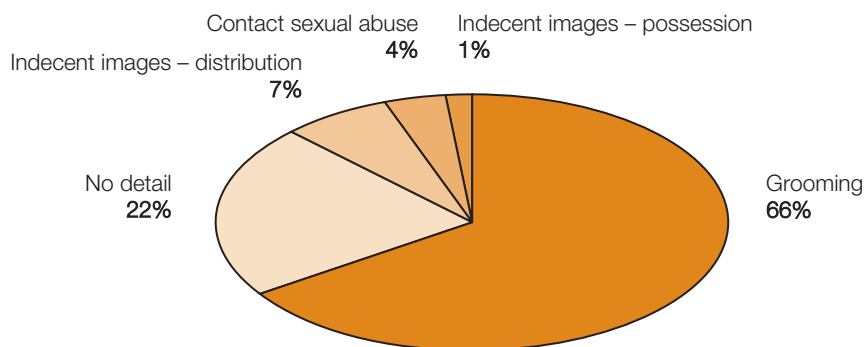
#### CEOP reports by suspect activity



When we break the offences down into specific categories of offences, the most commonly reported suspect activity was 'possession of indecent images of children' (548 reports), closely followed by 'contact sexual abuse' (513 reports) and the third most reported single suspect activity was for 'grooming – inciting a child to perform a sexual act'. When these are compared with the type of environment, the majority of reports for possession of indecent images is not cited or is reported as being offline (due to the nature of the offence) as is also the case with contact sexual abuse; where an environment is stated, 267 of the 513 reports suggest that the activity is taking place offline.

In terms of reports that are subject to further investigation and analysis, again grooming comes top and forms the majority of CEOP's work. When this is compared to the previous year's reporting it can be seen that grooming and the distribution of images are again the most prevalent type of suspect activity reported (see chart below).

#### Reports subject to further investigation by activity



### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.2 Grooming

In the 2008-2009 Strategic Overview, grooming was identified as a key trend in reports submitted to CEOP. It was the single largest issue that the public reported and, as an offending behaviour, was the most prevalent kind of abuse. Over the last two years grooming is seen as an increasing trend. This still continues to be the case and could also be due to the publicity drive around the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button and the education of children around grooming on the internet. Additionally, police hi-tech crime units are reporting an increase in child grooming investigations over the last year.

Of all 6,291 CEOP reports the most common report was for grooming with 1,536 (25%) reports being made. Grooming is also made up of a number of sub-categories which have been broken down in Table 1 below. It shows that the majority of reports are for 'inciting a child to watch or perform a sexual act' and for 'suspicious contact' perhaps where a responsible adult is uncomfortable with some contact taking place with a child.

**Table 1**

<i>Grooming – suspicious activity by sub-category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Inciting a child to perform a sexual act	434	28%
Suspicious contact	389	25%
Inciting a child to watch a sexual act	183	12%
Suspicious online contact with a child – social networking	163	11%
Making arrangements to meet a child	135	9%
Suspicious online contact with a child – inappropriate chat	115	7%
Suspicious online contact with a child – instant messaging	72	5%
Suspicious online contact with a child – gaming site	26	2%
Suspicious contact with a child – mobile phone	19	1%

When grooming reports are compared by the environment in which these reports are occurring, grooming that takes place on the internet heavily outweighs that which takes place offline, although this is likely a result of the perception that CEOP tends to receive reports around online grooming rather than sexual abuse in general. Windows Live Messenger remains the most reported environment for online grooming with 417 of the 1,536 total reports, followed by Facebook with 166 reports of grooming, compared to a total of 55 in the offline environment.

Grooming of a child to perform a sexual act and inciting a child to watch a sexual act are offences which are, in the main, occurring within MSN. In addition to this, most reports relating to grooming within an instant message environment come from MSN. Of the reports for 'suspicious or online contact with a child – social networking', approximately half relate to reports about Facebook (84 reports). In the category of 'making arrangements to meet a child', Facebook (24) and MSN (27) were most commonly reported. For 'inappropriate chat', My Space and MSN came out on top.



CEOP receives a number of reports from major providers of technology in relation to grooming, although liaison with these companies has resulted in more quality submissions and appears to have significantly reduced offenders using these environments. In particular, popular social networking sites should make it easier for its users to report using the 'ClickCEOP' button or at the very least make it easier for users to pass reports to them. This would enable a better understanding of the extent and nature by which grooming takes place in this environment.

It is understood, prior to the emergence of the internet, that grooming in the offline environment is likely to have taken place over a much longer period; however the internet has significantly changed the nature and pace at which grooming can take place. In addition to providing the illusion of anonymity, which facilitates the rapid escalation of further activity,

### 3. Offending behaviour

the internet also facilitates sophisticated methods of grooming whereby the offender can take on a number of different personas at any one time whilst still remaining anonymous, adapting their behaviour to suit those with whom they are in contact, thereby creating vast contact lists of potential victims. The method of multiple personas is also discussed later under section 3.5, Motivation.

Additionally, offenders groom victims for different purposes and not all will end with an attempt to meet up offline. Some seek images of children to fulfil fantasies, share with other offenders to improve their standing within a sharing network to demonstrate access to children, or to use to blackmail their victims at a later date. This has implications for the investigation of online grooming offences which, by their very nature, are more complex than those of indecent image investigations or offline contact offences. Investigations often cross over police force and international boundaries.

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### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.3 Distribution of indecent images

The second most common report into CEOP was for the distribution of indecent images, where 1,005 reports were made to CEOP. This category also possesses a number of sub categories within it. These are broken down and can be seen in Table 2. 'Other' as a category, contains those reports where distribution took place via unknown means. However, from police force data we can say that the distribution of indecent images mostly relate to the instances where indecent images have been found by law enforcement on either the offender's mobile phone and/or computer.

Table 2 shows that peer to peer (P2P) was the most common method for the distribution of indecent images, closely followed by commercial websites and social networking sites. P2P and social networking sites are discussed further under Section 5.2 Prominent Trends in Technology and commercial sites are discussed under Section 5.4 European Financial Coalition but, of note, in relation to environment, no specific environmental data is held for commercial websites. The same can be said of distribution via peer to peer environments, although those that are mentioned include Limewire and EDonkey.

**Table 2**

<i>Distribution of indecent images by sub category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Other	419	42%
Via peer-to-peer	137	14%
Via commercial website	108	11%
Via social networking site	107	11%
Via non-commercial website	86	9%
Via photo sharing site	64	6%
Via email	33	3%
Via mobile phone	20	2%
Via instant messaging	15	1%
Via newsgroups	10	1%
Via bulletin boards	5	0%
Via FTP server	1	0%

When assessing the demand for new images, the numbers involved in the production of those images, those responsible for the production of images and those responsible for the management of child abuse websites, analysis demonstrates two distinct groups. Firstly, there are those who produce images for sexual gratification and share with like-minded individuals and secondly, those who seek to profit from the commercial production and sale of images. Although we are unable to assess how many indecent images have been downloaded, from the images that are seized, we can say that demand is high. This has not changed since the last Strategic Overview.

### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.4 Production of images

The key trend that CEOP has noted in relation to the production of images is an increase in the numbers of self-taken images by children. Whilst these are primarily as a result of a child or young person being groomed, some children also appear to upload such images of themselves without coercion. This suggests that to some extent young people and children still feel that they have a degree of anonymity online where they can experiment without consequence. What is perhaps not understood by them is that these acts are easily recorded from the internet and within seconds can be uploaded into different online environments such as bulletin boards, news groups and other online social media.

It has also been identified that there has been an increase in the use of webcam streaming chat sites with paedophile activity where users can interact either through instant messages and/or webcam. Some of these sites appear to be designed specifically to attract children/young people. The behaviour of some young users is often highly sexualised, providing further opportunities for predatory paedophiles who will often utilise video capture software to record the video streams for later viewing and trading. There is potential for these video captures to be used to blackmail victims.

CEOP's Image Analysis and Victim Identification Team has identified girls as young as eight who have carried out sexual acts on web cam through chat rooms. It has also been noted by Image Analysis and Victim Identification that some investigations have found that instances where girls have been encouraged to groom friends or younger members of their own family to become involved in their online acts. This further highlights the manipulative nature of online grooming.

*Table 3*

<i>Type of image</i>	<i>Total</i>
Self Taken Image	12
Trusted Friend or Adult	10
Stranger*	8
Intra Familial	6
Neighbour	2
Unknown	1
Total	39

*\*skewed as there were 8 victims but 1 offender.*

Of note, the Image Analysis and Victim Identification Team this year has not identified any images as being downloaded from commercial websites. In general, bulk submissions to the Team are down but the images provided are of increased resolution, the results of which can be seen in the number of identified victims from images. In previous years the average number of those identified through image analysis was 22; this year the Team has identified 39<sup>2</sup> child victims.

Last year a rise was reported in abusive images of babies seen by CEOP. This has not been the experience of the Image Analysis and Victim Identification Team this year.

The use of child modelling sites by those with a sexual interest in children has also been reported. These are whole websites that are purported to be dedicated to child models. However, in one collection 70% were found not to have contained a head shot; the focus was on the torso, breast and genital areas. In addition, some of these sites are clearly indicative of offending behaviour, with one child modelling site reporting 15,000 people joining in a single day.

There has been some reported increase in the rise of Computer Generated Imaging (CGI) to create images of child abuse and this is now addressed in legislation which came into effect on 6 April 2010 under the Criminal Justice Act 2009. This prohibits indecent images of children created by CGI. The rise in CGI and digitally manipulated images has and will continue to present challenges for victim identification.

<sup>2</sup> This figure differs from that within the CEOP 2009-10 Annual Review (47) as this relates to the number of children who were safeguarded and protected via the victim identification process. The figure cited in this document (39) relates to the number of children solely identified through abuse images directly.

### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.5 Motivation

In assessing the nature, scope and scale of online predatory behaviour, a number of trends in offending behaviour have been identified by CEOP covert internet investigators – primarily that offenders are switching between various online media to commit offences highlighting a combination of suspects' proficient use of online technology; and their complex grooming methods which are highly manipulative. As such, the impact of such behaviour on victims can be hugely underestimated.

Often, predatory behaviour starts in social networking sites by way of a friendship request or a message. Victims are targeted by a combination of an offender's particular preferences and a lack of basic security on the part of the victim, e.g. publicly viewable profile information. Instant messaging remains the predominant media used for this type of offending.

Investigations conducted into the activities of those responsible for the sexual abuse of children have highlighted that there is a clear link between the sexual fantasies of the offender and the particular age preference for children held by the offender and the content of the child abuse images they have collected. Image collections appear to reflect the general profile of the children the offender would like to, or in fact has, sexually abused.

There has been a notable rise in the number of cases referred to the Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) over the past year involving large scale, complex investigations with multiple victims. In some cases this can entail the online grooming of hundreds of victims simultaneously by one or more offenders facilitated by the use of social networking sites. Within such cases, we have seen more evidence of offenders creating different online and offline personas enabling them to establish two separate relationships with their victims. As children offer personal details online, offenders are able to highlight common ground and individual vulnerabilities that can be used against them by their offline persona. This is a highly manipulative process that results in children often being totally unaware that the two relationships they have developed are with one and the same person.

Many victims have engaged in sexualised conversation or behaviour and go on to feel complicit in what they have done, rarely recognising the incidents as abuse. As such, they tend to be ashamed of what they have done. Added to this is the dimension of professionals having seen the text or images they have created, exposing what they thought would be anonymous or private behaviour. The initial approach to these victims is key to the effective elicitation of information from children and minimising any impact of the abuse. Anecdotally CEOP has found that this specific group of victims find it particularly difficult to disclose the abuse they have suffered.

A recent BAU study in relation to producers of indecent images of children found that most offenders were primarily motivated by sharing their images. It also examined the specific differences between sharers and non-sharers:

*'The 'sharing producers' in this study appear to have aspects of their behaviour and personality which appear distinct from the 'non-sharing producers'. Their levels of access to the victim are higher, the nature of their abuse is more serious and their grooming and manipulation more sophisticated and appears to be focussed on manipulating the victims to collaborate with the abuse.'*<sup>3</sup>

There has been a steady rise in the number of investigations, in general terms, relating to women who sexually abuse children. Awareness of female abusers is increasing as a result of high profile cases reported in the media and shows that there has been a positive shift in professionals' thinking towards challenging the stereotypical view that women are only ever caring and maternal figures in children's lives; it acknowledges that some can pose a risk of sexual harm to children in their own right. The increase in referrals suggests that law enforcement officers are considering females as potential perpetrators of child sexual abuse. What is clear is that in many of these cases, the women were found to pose a significant risk of sexual harm to children, with many displaying a tendency towards sadistic behaviour towards their victims.

<sup>3</sup> Sheehan, V. & Sullivan, J. (2010) A Qualitative analysis of child sexual offenders involved in the manufacture of indecent images of children. Journal of Sexual Aggression, vol 16, No 2, pp. 143-167.

### 3. Offending behaviour

#### 3.6 Other threats – networked offenders

It is often the case that collectors of images are not always solitary and can network online and offline to obtain images from others. Connection is made to gain access to children or to affirm and justify their offending with like-minded individuals by sharing experiences to normalise their behaviour. Normalising this behaviour is also a consequence of networking. Of those offences where no links were made to commercial websites or child abuse networks, it is suggested that the majority of the offences were individuals extracting and storing indecent images of children. However, it is also understood that investigations often do not have the resources or time to investigate these offences to the extent where networks may be found.

Networks of child abuse offenders had previously tended to be more localised but the internet now allows networks to be built across not only police force boundaries but international boundaries. In the course of CEOP investigations, the sharing of indecent images of children and other related material still continues to be prevalent amongst child abuse offenders.

Online bulletin boards or forums specifically catering for those with a sexual interest in children are used frequently by offenders. These can have thousands of worldwide members with sub forums created to cater for non-English speaking users. Through investigations and offender debrief interviews there is a greater understanding of why offenders collect the images they do, but more understanding is needed around how these are shared with other offenders and to what extent offenders are networked rather than simply being members of the same forum.

Covert internet investigators have found that certain forums moderate user uploaded content, attempting to ensure that no laws are broken within the hosting country. The forums act as a meeting place for paedophiles, offering justification for, and normalisation of, their behaviour. Some forums allow members to download electronic magazines and podcasts and listen to streaming radio stations. Evidence shows that members trade in indecent images of children with individuals they have met on these forums. The actual trades typically take place via means independent of the forum e.g. instant messaging or file sharing. There is also some evidence that members travel both within the borders of their own country and internationally to meet each other.



**Networks of child abuse offenders had previously tended to be more localised but the internet now allows networks to be built across not only police force boundaries but international boundaries.**



Many forces are seeing an increase in the numbers of networks of offenders involved in child sexual exploitation that occurs both on and offline. Investigations have highlighted this kind of offender behaviour as a growing trend. However, more information is required to understand the methods they employ and whether or not this type of offending behaviour is on the increase or is it simply that forces are becoming far more aware of it as an issue. What is clear is that the offending behaviour is predatory, aggressive and targets the most vulnerable children.

There is a need to increase knowledge of offender networks through the collection, collation and analysis of national and international intelligence. Indeed, police forces are beginning to develop better information collection and strategy development for such networks. This will, in turn, enhance the enforcement capability and enable a more effective and efficient response to disrupting and preventing the activities through tactical support. Many police forces are beginning to understand the need for a multi-agency response to such networks and to develop proactive intelligence-gathering activities.



## 4. Risk-taking behaviour by children

The average British person spends around 30 hours a week online. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace and Bebo continue to prove popular, with 25% of people logging on at least once a day<sup>4</sup>. The National Audit Office (NAO) recently reported that on average 11-16 year olds spend 2.5 hours a day online; younger children are becoming regular and confident users<sup>5</sup>. Three-quarters of 11-16 year olds use instant messaging to communicate with friends and 62% use the internet for doing homework. Increasing access to and time spent on the internet, often away from parental supervision and guidance may increase the risk to children from child sexual offenders who seek to take advantage of this behaviour. Education is a key driver in ensuring that children can benefit from the experience of the internet whilst remaining safe.

Again, children and young people's risk-taking behaviour is one of the most worrying and significant trends noted for the second year by CEOP. As discussed in previous sections, the number of self-taken images of particularly young females has increased. There appear to be two main issues in relation to these images. Firstly, that the types of images found could indicate that young girls are more sexually aware, as often the content was uploaded by them for boys around the same age. Of course, it may not be that young girls are more sexually aware than they were previously, rather that it has become more apparent on the web than in the offline environment. The early sexualisation of young girls may also motivate some to present themselves as being much older than they actually are.

Secondly, the rise in self-taken images gives a strong indication that the nature of grooming is changing and that children and young people are failing to understand how technology can increase the risk to them. This is not an issue related to their competence in using technology but more about their understanding of the nature of the online environment and ways they may be vulnerable to exploitation. There has been an increase in the number of reported cases of young girls willing to engage in risk-taking behaviour proposed by groomers on first contact. The victim can form a strong bond over the internet and will often present as uncooperative with police investigations given the effectiveness of grooming techniques and their perception of being in a 'meaningful relationship'.

Concern then surrounds the apparent desensitisation of children to personal safety issues regarding the use of communications media and their gateway to the subsequent meeting of potential sexual offenders.

There have been many examples of inappropriate sexual behaviour by young people and children which make them more vulnerable. These include 'sexting', the act of sending explicit messages or photos of a sexual nature via mobile phones; and the use of sexual screen names in chat rooms, perhaps for reasons of expression but not realising how enticing this is to those who wish to exploit them. Concerns have been expressed around the promotion of sexual behaviour amongst children and young people, for example, the use of 'shagbands' which are believed to encourage inappropriate sexual behaviour within these groups. 'Shagbands' are exchanged for engagement in sexual activity and different coloured bands denotes a differing level of sexual act.

It is clear that we need to understand why there appears to be an increase in sexual behaviour by children and young people on the internet and particularly how they are using the internet and what their perceived risks of the internet are. Do they feel some sites are safer than others? What do they actually understand as being abuse or exploitation? Do they know what acceptable behaviour is?



**Children and young people's risk-taking behaviour is one of the most worrying and significant trends noted for the second year by CEOP.**



One suggestion put forward by Dr Linda Papadopoulos in her Sexualisation of Young People Review, is that there is a 'popular perception that young people (particularly young women and girls) are increasingly being pressured into appearing sexually available'. Children are increasingly exposed to pornography of various levels through the media which also encourages them to look older and act in a promiscuous manner<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk/broadband-brits-spend-30-hours-a-week-online-051009.html>

<sup>5</sup> Staying Safe Online, Memorandum by the National Audit Office, February 2010.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexualisation-young-people.pdf>

## 4. Risk-taking behaviour by children

Increased use of the internet by children can lead to an increase in exposure to adult pornography through even the most innocent of searches. Some of these search terms lead to pornographic sites in which the level of depravity has increased over time. In addition, there is easier access to adult pornography online now than ever before which, in itself, makes it more accessible to those underage. Therefore awareness-raising and empowerment continues to be a priority of CEOP. This not only focuses on children and young people but also incorporates the responsibility of appropriate adults within the home and schooling environments to make provisions for protecting children and young people in the online environment. CEOP's 'Thinkuknow' programme provides a resource for adults and empowers children and young people. This is to reduce or prevent harm from risks associated with the internet and technology and encourages safe and responsible online behaviour.

Lessons in the safe use of the internet are set to become a compulsory part of the curriculum for primary school children in England from 2011. The lessons are one element of a new government strategy unveiled in February 2010 called 'Click Clever, Click Safe'. Children will also be encouraged to follow an online 'Green Cross Code' and block and report inappropriate content.

## 5. Technology and the online environment

Research findings<sup>7</sup> combined with what has been highlighted through a qualitative analysis of both the proactive and reactive work carried out by police forces in the online environment indicate the existence of a threat that has the ability to escalate at an alarming rate.

Here, predatory sexual offenders exploit a number of factors, all of which contribute to the speed and ease at which they can move from communicating with a potential victim through to committing a serious sexual offence against a child. These factors centre on the offenders' growing awareness and understanding of technology combined with an apparently 'increased' level of confidence when it comes to escalating from communicating via various media through to arranging a physical meeting with a potential victim; the apparent desensitisation of children to the safety issues surrounding the use of various communications media and ultimately to meeting 'strangers'; and the ease, availability and relatively low cost of both communications and travel. These three factors all enable offenders to move from communicating with the victim to committing an offence within a short space of time.

Offenders continue to utilise developing technology and are quick to adapt to new emerging trends, such as private networks, to facilitate their abuse. The use of smart phones with camera facilities and internet connectivity enable the offender to record live abuse and upload the images using online storage facilities and distribute them through their choice of platform.

Additionally, the use of cloud computing provides further complexities where data can be stored away from the physical computer. CEOP anticipates that offenders will make increasing use of cloud computing technology in order to facilitate storage of images.

### 5.1 CEOP reports by environment

Reports by environment should indicate where children are experiencing abuse or exploitation and therefore some meaningful conclusions can be made.

Of all reports, there are an obvious top seven where abuse is taking place in an online environment, before a substantial gap in the numbers recorded is found. These seven environments make up 81% (5,072) of all reports. These are displayed below in Table 4.

**Table 4**

<i>Environment</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Other (Not specified)*	1,251	20%
Offline*	1,044	17%
Website (No further details)	895	14%
MSN	755	12%
Not Cited	493	8%
Facebook	394	6%
4D Interactive	240	4%

*\*Offline had 880 reports and Other had 996 reports where the age was reported at being 0, this meaning that the age is unknown.*

There are a total of 63 environments where abuse has taken place that have been reported into CEOP. It is understood that many of these environments do not currently have the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button embedded making it difficult for users to report abuse directly to law enforcement. When the environment is assessed against those under 18 years, Facebook in this age category again features as one of the top six environments where abuse or exploitation has taken place and is the most often reported place for inappropriate contact.

<sup>7</sup> Bourke, M.L. and Hernandez (2009). The 'Butner Study' Redux: A Report of the Incidence of Hands-Child Victimization by Child Pornography Offenders. Springer Science and Business Media.

## 5. Technology and the online environment

Keeping with reports by environment, age categories have been broken down into reports where the age of the person making the report is under 18 years (1,628 reports, 25%) and those who are over 18 years (793 reports, 12%). Of note, a default age where the age is 0 or unknown occurs in 4,042 reports (63%) these have not been included in the following analysis which is displayed in Tables 5 and 6.

*Table 5*

<i>Environment by under 18s</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
MSN	462	28%
Website – No Specific Name	200	12%
Other	150	9%
Offline	129	8%
Facebook	105	7%
Not Cited	88	6%

For reports from under 18s which detail the environment where abuse has taken place, there are six obvious categories from a list of 63 possible environments before a significant gap is found between the number of reports received after 'not cited'. This group of six accounts for 70% of all reports by environment. Interestingly, if the age of reporter is lowered to under 16, of the 1,263 reports considered the most common environments where abuse was reported were MSN (410), Offline (107), Facebook (85), Myspace, Hotmail and Bebo, 4D interactive follow. However again, in a large number of reports the environment was not specified.

*Table 6*

<i>Environment by over 18s</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
MSN	163	21%
Website – No Specific Name	163	21%
Facebook	120	15%
Other	105	13%

There were four obvious categories to display in Table 6 from a possible list of 44 environments where reports had been made by the over 18s age group. This group of four account for 70% of all reports by environment by over 18s.

By comparing environment by the age of the person making the report, it highlights a particular issue with reporting by members of the public in relation to offline abuse for those aged under 16 years and the prevalence of social networking sites in reports of child sexual abuse in general. However, as previously pointed out, not all reports are made by the complainant and not all reports relate to sexual abuse but could form part of perceived suspicious activity by a responsible adult.

## 5. Technology and the online environment

### 5.2 Prominent trends in technology

Peer-to-peer (P2P) communication is used by persons who wish to share files on the internet. It is seemingly anonymous, often encrypted and requires specific software in order to share files on a specific directory. Abusive images of children in both still and video format are exchanged in this manner throughout the world.

As stated earlier, Table 2 showed that P2P was the most common method for the distribution of indecent images, closely followed by commercial websites and social networking sites. Little is known about the nature and extent to which child sexual offenders use P2P and it continues to be an intelligence gap. However, it is recognised as the most frequently used environment for distributing images and therefore CEOP has now set up a strategy group in an effort to understand the threat.

Many forces have expressed concerns to CEOP about the increasing use of social networking sites particularly by offenders around their ability to identify, groom and contact victims. This is perhaps no better highlighted than in the conviction of Peter Chapman for the murder, kidnap and rape of Ashleigh Hall from Darlington in October 2009. Chapman was a registered sex offender who used the Facebook social networking site to befriend Ashleigh, contact was then instigated which resulted in Ashleigh's murder.

Anecdotal evidence from police forces suggests that they are experiencing increases in grooming incidents within social networking sites with Facebook being the most prominent website being mentioned. Conversely, this may be as a result of a number of high-profile cases which may have encouraged children to report this type of behaviour to law enforcement.

However, it is clear from reading the details of the offence that often, especially in grooming offences, contact with the offender online will have taken place some considerable time prior to reporting. The catalyst for reporting is often the progression from the offender talking to the victim through MSN or on Facebook to webcam usage of either the offender filming themselves performing sexual acts and/or requesting that the child themselves carry out sexual acts over a web cam; or in turn, requesting to meet the victim face to face. It is believed that a large number of these offences do not come to notice of the police across forces, as victims do not report and may block offenders or have no further contact with them.

CEOP is addressing the issue of social networking sites through partnership working with social networking providers. On 12 July 2010, CEOP launched a new downloadable application – 'ClickCEOP' – in Facebook which enables all users – especially young people – to access the latest advice on online safety and to report instances of suspected grooming or inappropriate sexual behaviour directly from their profile to CEOP. When people choose to add and 'bookmark' the application it will appear in their newsfeed and on their profiles, sending out a clear signal to their friends, family and others that they are in control online.

Once added, young users receive regular messages from CEOP and its partner organisations – the NSPCC, Beatbullying and Get Safe Online – who operate 'behind the 'ClickCEOP' button' to protect children. The 'app' is the outcome of collaboration between CEOP and Facebook who have combined Facebook's expertise in connecting and communicating online with CEOP's expertise in helping young people stay safe.

CEOP are continuing to work with a number of organisations with regards to embedding the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button within their online environments. This is as a result of the Safer by Design work the Centre is doing to make the environments young people use as safe as can be.

## 5. Technology and the online environment

### 5.3 Industry analysis

CEOP needs to understand the threat of new and emerging technologies and be able to assess the likely impacts of new technology coming on to the market and how it could be manipulated by child sexual offenders. Horizon scanning is a key tool to establish potential threats, opportunities, likely future developments of new technologies and provide an understanding of how criminals might exploit it. CEOP is now making some progress through collaboration with other law enforcement departments to answer these questions.

Developments of particular note where CEOP will need to assess the impact on child abuse offending are in the following areas:

There have been a number of announcements from communication companies that the speed of broadband is about to increase. BT have announced that they are to complete a super-fast broadband network by 2012<sup>8</sup>. The speed at which content can be delivered is likely to change as new technology has been developed which could deliver data ten times faster than current undersea cables, the equivalent speed can be explained as the same as sending 400 DVDs per second over a 7,000 kilometres, roughly the distance between Paris and Chicago<sup>9</sup>.

BT Wholesale is reported to be developing a new video content delivery network for UK internet service providers (ISPs) – BT Content Connect'. The service would essentially store (cache) popular video content on the ISPs own network as opposed to dragging it over several servers. Again this lowers congestion and speeds up performance. A number of services such as YouTube and Virgin Media are in talks to share its content<sup>10</sup>.

Connection sharing is predicted to pick up in 2011, however one of the disruptive possibilities is that of users pooling their mobile broadband connections, where users could for example “share my mobile connection – only with my Facebook friends”<sup>11</sup>.

In relation to the speed and ease at which images can now be shared between offenders, questions are raised about the capacity of law enforcement to maintain the pace necessary to successfully bring to justice those who seek to abuse this new technology. The process is likely to become more complicated, require more resources and have serious financial implications on already decreasing budgets.

Industry providers are taking the risk to children seriously with TalkTalk UK proposing a parental control to curb illegal P2P. Whilst this will curb illegal file sharing, it will also allow parents to restrict internet access via cinema style classifications which would include the blocking of file sharing sites and peer to peer sites, pornography and gambling<sup>12</sup>.



**In relation to the speed and ease at which images can now be shared between offenders, questions are raised about the capacity of law enforcement to maintain the pace necessary to successfully bring to justice those who seek to abuse this new technology.**



<sup>8</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8424401.stm>

<sup>9</sup> <http://rss.slashdot.org/~r/Slashdot/slashdot/~3/5E2iTSrJ1Q/100-Petabit-Internet-Backbone-Coming-Into-View>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ispreview.co.uk/story/2009/12/08/bt-and-google-develop-broadbandvideo-delivery-service-for-uk-isps.html>

<sup>11</sup> Industry Analysis Paper, January 2010.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ispreview.co.uk/story/2009/09/29/broadband-isp-talktalk-uk-proposesparental-controls-to-curb-illegal-p2p.html>

## 5. Technology and the online environment

### 5.4 European Financial Coalition – commercial sites

The European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online (EFC) was formally launched on 3-4 March 2009 at the 'An Indecent Profit' conference by M. Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the European Commission. The EFC is funded by the European Commission and led by CEOP and works to bring together stakeholders engaged in the fight against the commercial distribution of child sexual abuse images by tracking and disrupting the trade in child abuse images and confiscating the proceeds of crime by those who are engaged in the commercial distribution of child sexual abuse images on the internet.

The aim of the EFC is to facilitate and support pan-European police operations focused on this area of criminality, with cross-sector solutions targeting, in particular, the electronic payment systems used to purchase child exploitation and abuse images on the internet.

This will ultimately help to:

- identify, locate and safeguard victims;
- identify, locate and arrest perpetrators<sup>13</sup>;
- identify, trace and seize the assets of offenders<sup>14</sup>; and
- educate, inform and empower key stakeholders to prevent the spread and ultimately disrupt and dismantle this crime once and for all.

European Commission (EC) funding has allowed for a 14 month pilot project. The pilot officially began on 1 July 2009. Depending on the success of the pilot project, EC funding may be extended for a further three years.

The EFC has collected and analysed intelligence around commercial websites and an intelligence assessment was completed in September 2010<sup>15</sup>.

Some of the questions examined within that intelligence assessment are: what is the true extent of the problem, motivations of distributors, motivations of the buyers, and what financial processes are used and what profits are being made by organisers. Answering these key questions will allow for effective and long-term strategies to be developed and implemented against commercial sites and the organisers of these sites.

Emerging issues identified at a national level include the use of pre-paid credit cards to pay for online images of child abuse and the provision of free encryption software over the internet.

<sup>13</sup> Purchasers of child abuse images.

<sup>14</sup> Organisers/suppliers of child abuse images.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ceop.police.uk/efc/public-library/latest-news/update-not-just-a-picture-conference>



## 6. Missing and travelling child sexual offenders

Over the last 20 years the number of visits abroad by UK residents has more than doubled<sup>16</sup>. Low-cost travel also creates opportunities for those to travel abroad to offend.

There have been a number of successful high-profile cases where CEOP has assisted in the location and arrest of missing and travelling child sexual offenders. Through assisted interviews information has been sought to aid the understanding of why offenders choose the destinations they do. We know that the socio-economic conditions in developing countries create a situation that is easily exploited by offenders seeking to abuse children. However there are other countries that are targeted by offenders for other reasons, for example, age of consent and ease of travel.

In last year's Strategic Overview the extent that offenders continue to offend while missing was highlighted as an intelligence gap. The true picture continues to be difficult to establish as, regardless of whether offenders are in the UK or overseas, any offences committed may not be detected or disclosed. There are many factors which influence the reporting of such offences and the Home Office Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) team are conducting a study around 'Serious Further Offences'.

The Travelling Sex Offender Baseline Assessment<sup>17</sup> provides intelligence in respect of the motivations for offenders who travel overseas and their selection of a destination country. However, conclusions drawn from this assessment must be caveated as the data set is relatively small. Through the ACPO Travelling Sex Offenders Working Group, the use of foreign travel notifications are being analysed within the CEOP Intelligence Faculty. Anecdotal evidence indicates offenders may be attracted to countries which have a lower age of consent, which do not have a management regime and those which have been researched and found to not have extradition treaties in place (making it more difficult for the UK to bring them back to the UK to face justice). Offenders also appear to be attracted to areas where poverty exists; where there is greater access to children; where there is a greater acceptance of sexual exploitation; and countries which have different and more lenient criminal punishment response to sexual abuse.

In 2009-2010, CEOP's UK Tracker Team accepted a total of 22 new referrals of the highest risk non-compliant child sexual offenders from across the UK. During the same year, the UK Tracker Team were instrumental in effecting the arrest of five high-risk child sexual offenders, located a further four offenders and disseminated intelligence on an additional two offenders who were later arrested.

In the same time period, of the 19 offenders located and/or arrested after referral to the UK Tracker Team:

- ten were from different police force areas;
- six were 'very high-risk' and five were 'high-risk';
- four were on the Sex Offender's Register for life, six were on for ten years and one was on for seven years; and
- four were located and/or arrested in the UK and seven were located and/or arrested overseas.

The 19 located offenders had been missing for between 20 days and five years. Cumulatively, the 19 offenders had been missing for 18 years and nine and half months, an average of one year, eight and half months. In most cases it is not known whether they had access to children. In one case, the offender reported that he had been in a relationship with a female who had two children under 16 years of age; some of the offenders were known to use aliases, which increases the complexity of tracing them. One offender was later found to have obtained a false passport and was living overseas. Where the information is known, most offenders appeared to have been undertaking manual work (painting, decorating, cleaning etc) to finance themselves. Other offenders were in receipt of a private pension or living off existing funds.

Intelligence indicates they had travelled to over nine different countries (Belgium, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Spain and Thailand). Half were wanted or subsequently charged, for offences in addition to the Breach of Notification Requirements, including gross indecency, making indecent images of children and facilitating the commission of a child; breach of a sex offences prevention order (SOPO) or community order; as well as drugs, driving licence and fraud identity offences.

<sup>16</sup> Office for National Statistics, Travel Trends 2008, August 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Restricted level document produced for the ACPO Travelling Sex Offender Working Group.

## 6. Missing and travelling child sexual offenders

One of the main barriers the UK Tracker Team and UK police face in successful risk management of offenders continues to be the challenges of extraditing non-compliant child sexual offenders from overseas back to the UK to face justice. This can mean that although intelligence work identifies an exact location for an offender overseas, they cannot always be returned to the UK. In such cases, full and relevant intelligence regarding the risk the offender poses is disseminated to the country, with recommended child protection measures for the host country to consider implementing in order to effectively manage that risk.

Of note, since 1997 the UK has had within domestic legislation, the ability to prosecute UK nationals who offend against children abroad. Section 72 Sexual Offences Act 2003 as amended by the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 2008 is the relevant reference. This in effect increases the reach of UK law globally and is commonly known as extra territorial (ET) jurisdiction.

Whilst CEOP takes the view that, where possible, a suspected child sexual offender should always face justice in the country where the abuse took place, it is true to say that, for a whole variety of reasons, this does not always happen; where those processes in country have failed, UK law enforcement should act using ET powers.

### 6.1 Most Wanted

CEOP's Most Wanted website, run in partnership with the charity Crimestoppers, was set up in November 2006 and acts as a portal for the public to come forward to assist UK law enforcement to locate and trace convicted, high risk child sexual offenders who have gone missing from their MAPPA arrangements in the community. It is a tactic that is used when all other avenues of investigation and lines of enquiry have been exhausted and, as such, is a form of limited public disclosure in the efforts to locate these individuals. The potential for using Most Wanted is thoroughly risk-assessed and the site has delivered an 80% success rate in locating those offenders who have been featured since it was launched.

In a twelve month period, the CEOP Most Wanted website was visited thousands of times. From over 50 countries and a total of 569 cities. The vast majority were from across the UK, followed by USA, Australia, Ireland and other European countries including France, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands and Sweden. The website was also visited from countries as far away as Argentina, Thailand, South Korea and Ghana.

Visits to the website obviously increase where there is media coverage of a new offender being posted on the site. CEOP is now seeking to capitalise on new media to improve and increase awareness of 'Most Wanted' through viral marketing and use of social networking sites.

## 7. Child trafficking

Child trafficking (the movement and exploitation of children) is a form of child abuse. Boys and girls of all ages are trafficked into the UK from all over the world and exploited for many different purposes including sexual exploitation, forced labour, benefit fraud and criminal enterprise (cultivation of cannabis and street crime). The UK has demonstrated its commitment to tackling human trafficking (which encompasses child trafficking) in the past few years with the launch of the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking which was launched by the Home Office and Scottish Government and last updated in October 2009<sup>18</sup>. This plan has contributed to increasing awareness of trafficking and the ability of authorities and partner agencies to better protect trafficked children. However, levels of awareness and response are not consistent across the UK and child trafficking still remains a significant and less understood problem.

During the period 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010, CEOP identified 287 potential victims of child trafficking originating from a total of 47 countries<sup>19</sup>. This figure is an underestimate of the true scale of child trafficking in the UK this period, mainly due to the hidden nature and lack of awareness of this crime

### 7.1 Recruitment, control and coercion of children

**Recruitment.** Prior to being recruited children commonly experienced some form of personal tragedy (such as the death or arrest of their parents) and often moved in with a close relative. The relative would arrange transport for the child to the UK through an agent as they no longer could or wanted to support them. On other occasions the child sought escape from their circumstances. Traffickers often target isolated children or vulnerable families living in relative poverty. They may offer a better life for the child in the UK, with the opportunity of education or work for the child so they can support themselves or their relatives back home. A debt will often be placed on the child as the child or their family cannot afford the travel costs.

**Debt bondage.** Debt bondage is an amount of money determined by the trafficking network which the victim will have to pay off through work. The debt commonly covers travel arrangements, accommodation, food and trafficker fees. This debt is often at an inflated rate and it will take several years in exploitation for the child to work off. Debts identified in the data set ranged between £17,000 and £38,000. Vietnamese children's debt was often secured against relative's land. Some victims stated they were not paid in exploitation, but others were wiring money home to their family.

**Travel documentation.** Agents often provide travel documents but then take these documents off the children once they have been used, recycling them for use with other children. Agents trafficking Chinese and Vietnamese victims would often take back or instruct the child to destroy documentation before entering the UK. Without documentation, it is difficult to question the true identity, age and origin of a child, preventing or delaying removal. African and South Asian children were frequently given documentation in the family name of the trafficker, sometimes this was the passport of the trafficker's own child with the victim adopting their identity and travelling with the trafficker posing as a member of their family. They would sometimes wear the same clothes and have their hair styled to resemble the genuine holder of the passport.



**During the period 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010, CEOP identified 287 potential victims of child trafficking originating from a total of 47 countries. This figure is an underestimate of the true scale of child trafficking in the UK**



<sup>18</sup> [www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/humantrafficking004.htm](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/humantrafficking004.htm)

<sup>19</sup> In 46 cases exploitation had not yet occurred with indicators of trafficking being evidenced at port. Thirty two of these children were identified in London.

## 7. Child trafficking

There has been evidence that suggests an increase in the abuse of Tier 4 visas to gain entry to the UK. A Tier 4 visa may be granted to an individual who plans to study in the UK. It is possible that many children are successfully being trafficked via this method and not being identified as victims at port.

**Coaching.** Children are often coached in recounting background stories to UK authorities to assist asylum claims but prevent their true identification. Similarities between victim accounts of the same nationality may be an indication of coaching. Coaching is particularly common for unaccompanied children who arrive with inadequate documentation and claim asylum at port.

**Communication and children missing from care.** Many Chinese and Vietnamese victims identified prior to exploitation stated they knew no one inside the UK but some carried mobile phones<sup>20</sup> and either used these, landlines or the internet to contact individuals within the UK whilst accommodated in local authority provided care. Some went missing shortly after this communication. Unrelated individuals have also phoned or visited children's services to enquire or attempt to take custody of potential trafficked victims. Seventeen percent (50) of the children identified in the study were recorded as having gone missing from care at some point, with 15% (42 children – 28 Vietnamese, seven Chinese, seven other nationalities) still recorded as missing.

**Restriction of movement.** Children were often locked in safe houses and venues of exploitation, restricting their movement, preventing escape and obscuring victims from the public. If they left the venue of exploitation they were often accompanied.

**Threats and emotional, physical and sexual abuse.** Many victims of trafficking are subjected to sexual<sup>21</sup>, violent and psychological abuse. This abuse is often a means of control to ensure victim complicity but also may be for the traffickers self gratification. The threat of violence against a child or their family members was also used as a powerful tool to ensure cooperation.

<sup>20</sup> A total of seven Vietnamese and three Chinese children were recorded as being found with a mobile phone or SIM card whilst in local authority provided care.

<sup>21</sup> Traffickers have been known to rape female victims to brutally install control over their victim. This is more frequently seen when females are trafficked for sexual exploitation, to break their resistance and ensure complicity.

## 7. Child trafficking

### 7.2 Country Profiles

**Vietnamese children (58).** The trafficking of Vietnamese children into and within the UK is the largest and most significant trend this period. Some of the victims stated they flew to Russia with an agent and then travelled by lorry via the Czech Republic, Germany and France entering the UK by clandestine methods via a seaport. The criminal networks involved in the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of children are well organised, flexible and generate large finances mainly from the cultivation and wholesale distribution of cannabis.

Thirty-seven minors were identified as being exploited in cannabis factories, four were exploited for labour purposes (nail bars), three for street crime (breaking and entering into rival cannabis farms and illegally selling DVDs) and three sexually exploited (all were female). Thirty victims were aged between 13 and 17 when first trafficked into the UK, 74% were boys (43) and 26% girls (15).

Many Vietnamese minors have been charged, prosecuted and sentenced for the production and supply of cannabis but to date there have been no convictions of Vietnamese criminals who have trafficked children into the UK. However, from a safeguarding point of view, the greatest concern for these children is the significant number that go missing from local authority provided accommodation prior to or after exploitation. Networks may specifically recruit children as they are less likely to be detained or accommodated in secure premises than adults and are able to re-enter exploitation with relative ease.

Victims were identified as being destined for all regional areas of England and Wales, the most frequently identified destinations were the West Midlands (8), East Midlands (7) and Greater London (8). Although an increasing number of police forces are identifying Vietnamese cannabis farms locally<sup>22</sup>, the ability and ease with which networks can relocate at a national level (including the relocation of trafficked children) and thereby evading level two police proactivity, ensures that the number of children trafficked and exploited in cannabis farms is likely to remain at a high level.

**West African children (51).** Most children were trafficked from Nigeria (40) or Sierra Leone (7). Most children were exploited for benefit fraud (16) or domestic servitude (12). Where gender was specified over two thirds of the potential victims of trafficking were female (24 compared to 10 boys). This may be reflective of exploitation type with all six victims of sexual exploitation being female and eight girls exploited for domestic servitude (compared to two boys<sup>23</sup>). Of all the profiles identified, West African children had the most diverse age range, with potential victims aged between two and 17 when first trafficked to the UK. Again this is reflective of the exploitation type, whilst girls sexually exploited had reached puberty and were aged between 14 and 17, children exploited for benefit fraud were between four and 15, with most aged below ten. Children exploited in domestic servitude were trafficked into the UK as young as eight. The vast majority of West African children were destined for London (25).

The trafficking of African children appears to be more opportunistic perpetrated by one or a small number of individuals and differs greatly from the structured organised criminal networks that traffic Vietnamese and Chinese children. West African traffickers often accompany children at border controls flying directly to the UK and posing as a parent, guardian or close family member, with the child adopting an identity of a family member<sup>24</sup>. The African profile is unique in that most traffickers or exploiters identified were female (19 out of 33 traffickers identified) with the trafficker often the exploiter.

**Roma Children (32).** The 32 children identified is almost certainly an under estimate of the scale and level of threat. This is likely to be due to a lack of national awareness, with police reporting criminal activities<sup>25</sup> committed by children, but failing to identify them as victims of trafficking or investigating adults organising this activity. Most potential victims identified were female (17) rather than male (9), ranging from seven to 17 years of age<sup>26</sup>, most being 16 or 17. Where exploitation type

<sup>22</sup> 50 out of 58 force areas. Findings from the UK National Problem Profile: Commercial Cultivation of Cannabis. July 2010. Regional Intelligence Unit for the East. Unrestricted.

<sup>23</sup> The sex of the child in the remaining two cases was not specified.

<sup>24</sup> Where port of entry was established 32 children arrived via an airport compared to two who arrived at a seaport.

<sup>25</sup> This would include theft of person, distraction theft, shoplifting and begging.

<sup>26</sup> Age was only recorded in 13 cases.

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was identified, most were exploited for street crime (16), six for sexual exploitation, three for benefit fraud and two for labour exploitation. Traffickers and exploiters were often the parents, guardians or siblings of the child. Operation Golf<sup>27</sup> has identified that Roma criminal networks are often hierarchal family based structures where children are exploited often by direct family members.

**Chinese children (24).** Between 1 May 2005 and the 28 February 2009, CEOP identified the trafficking of Chinese children into the UK as the most prominent trend. Despite the decrease this period, trafficked Chinese children still represent a major profile. Chinese trafficking networks appear to be the most advanced and sophisticated in the data set, employing a variety of control and coercion techniques. Networks are flexible and able to react quickly to law enforcement, proactively trafficking children into the UK via many different airports and routing them via many different countries. Most children still fly to the UK from Western European airports with tickets purchased shortly before departure, the agent catching a connecting flight and the child passing UK border controls unaccompanied.

Seventeen girls were identified compared to seven boys and potential victims were aged between ten and 17 years of age, with 79% (19) aged between 15 and 17 when trafficked. As identified in the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment into Child Trafficking in the UK, most children were exploited sexually (girls) or for labour purposes. There were seven cases where labour exploitation occurred, five where sexual exploitation occurred (sexual exploitation also occurred twice as a secondary form of exploitation) and two cases where the minors were exploited in cannabis factories.

**Other profiles.** Other significant countries of origin included Bangladesh (11) and Pakistan (7) from where children were mainly exploited for domestic servitude or labour exploitation (working in a restaurant or takeaway). Sixteen children and young people from Eastern Europe<sup>28</sup> were also identified, fourteen who were female and identified as being sexually exploited in brothels<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> A MPS police unit set up to combat a large Romanian Roma criminal network work exploit children as a means of generating illegal funds.

<sup>28</sup> Excluding Roma children.

<sup>29</sup> For eleven of the children and young people the intelligence originated from an untested source, most originating from crimestoppers reports.

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### 7.3 Awareness and changes in legislation

Lack of consistency in levels of awareness nationally still continues to be the biggest threat to identifying and protecting victims of trafficking. However, since April 2009, there have been several advances in raising awareness levels, such as the National Referral Mechanism and training for frontline UK Borders Agency officers and all new police recruits. CEOP will also be conducting training for first responders from Autumn 2010 and providing investigational best practice guidance<sup>30</sup>.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 can now be better applied to prosecute offenders who traffick younger children and babies following the amendment by the Borders, Citizenship & Immigration Act 2009. Section 71 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 introduces a new offence of holding someone in slavery or servitude, or requiring them to perform forced or compulsory labour. This piece of legislation became active as of the 6 April 2010 and is applicable in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The infrastructure is therefore in place for law enforcement to prosecute more cases successfully if adequate resources and planning is put in place.

<sup>30</sup>This training is scheduled to be available by the end of 2010.



# Appendix A

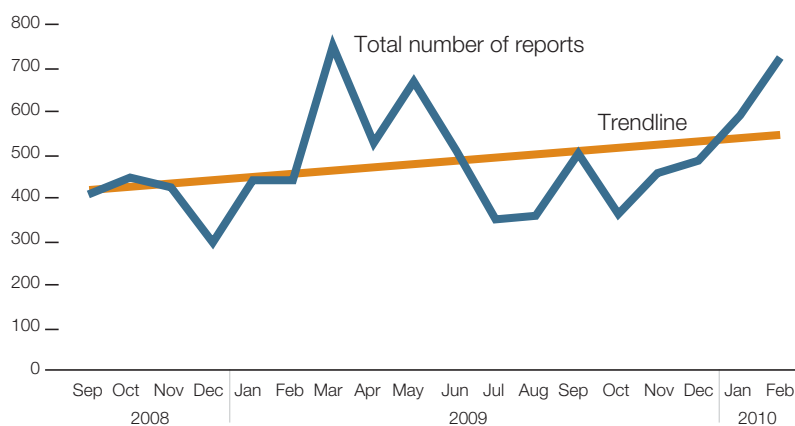
## Analysis of reports

All reports of child exploitation and sexual abuse enter CEOP via the referrals desk. The following statistics have been collated from all available data as given by the reporting person. As many of the submissions are internet based and not via a call centre, there is little opportunity to clarify or probe for further details.

CEOP continually strives to improve the comprehension and accuracy of reports through process reviews and it is hoped that the results can be quickly implemented. Within UK police forces there continues to be difficulties in distinguishing between online and offline offences when interrogating data and in some cases it is not feasible to even attempt to separate the two types of offending. In addition to this, it is apparent that there are difficulties in identifying linked offences where an offence starts in the online environment and then moves to the offline. This of course impacts on the accuracy of analysis. Police forces across the UK are increasingly prioritising these issues and many are in the process of developing intelligence processes and technology as the value of analysis to inform the future direction of direction of investigation is now better understood.

For the period 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010 CEOP received a total of 6,291 reports. The chart below shows that there are noticeable spikes in reporting at the beginning of each year; when the total number of reports over an 18 month period (1 September 2008 to 28 February 2010) are considered, it is clear that the number of reports is actually increasing year on year and is predicted to continue to do so. This is also reflected in the increasing of workloads experienced by the Referrals Team, which has put significant strain on resources within CEOP. It would therefore be prudent for all law enforcement agencies and partners to be mindful of this predicted rise in reporting in terms of resourcing.

*Total number of reports received by CEOP for the 18 month period (Sept 08-Feb 10)*



For the purposes of this Strategic Overview the following data has been taken for the period of 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010. As previously mentioned, there was a total of 6,291 reports to CEOP in this timeframe. Of these reports 4,307 (68%) were subject to further development and investigation by CEOP. The other 1,984 (32%) reports comprise those where no further action is required as the reports are not related to sexual abuse or exploitation and where possible have been forwarded on to a relevant agency for information.

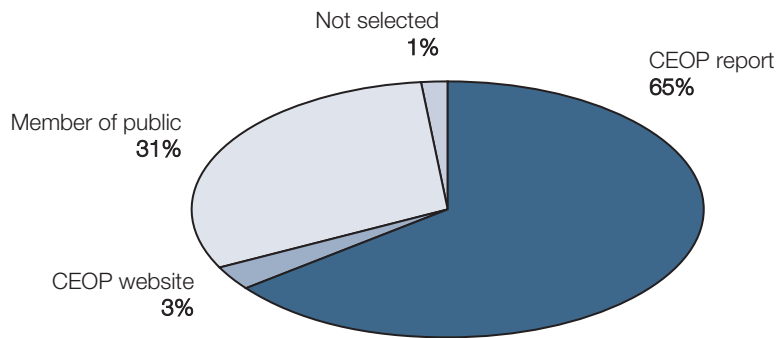
For the following section all reports, regardless of being subject to further investigation and development, are included in the analysis.

## Appendix A

Reports are initially categorised by the Referral Team as public reports and non-public reports. Public reports are those which have been submitted directly to CEOP. Based on this amended approach, public reports to CEOP total 2,391 (38% of all reports) and include reports via the ‘ClickCEOP’ advice and report button (1,551 or 65% of public reports) – by far the most popular method of reporting in this category – and member of the public via other means (747 or 31%).

The distribution of public reports can be seen more clearly in chart below.

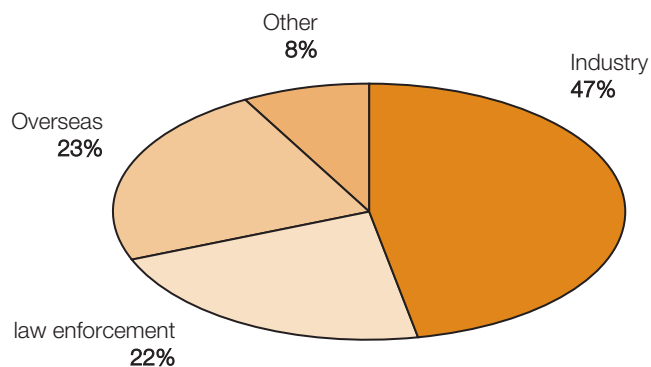
### Public reports



For the same period, a total of 3,900 (62% of all reports) non-public reports were made to CEOP with 47% coming from the online industry, NGOs and partner agencies (29% of the overall reports); 22% from UK law enforcement (17% of the overall reports); 23% from overseas law enforcement (14% of the overall figures); and 8% from other sources (2% of the overall reports).

The distribution of these reports can be seen below.

### Non-public reports



It is important to remember that any one report into CEOP can lead to the identification of scores of victims or offenders and as such, caution should be exercised when reporting on the number of reports as and by themselves.

## Appendix A

### Method of reporting

If all non-public and public reports are considered together, the preferred methods of reporting child exploitation and sexual abuse are shown in the table below:

<i>All reports by agency</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
CEOP Report	1551	25%
Crimestoppers	1065	17%
Member of Public	747	12%

As a method of reporting, the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button is the most popular way reports are made. Although non-public reports comprise of 62% of all referrals into CEOP, this breakdown shows Crimestoppers as an agency where members of the public perhaps feel more inclined to report instances of child abuse. On further investigation into the Crimestoppers data, it has become apparent that there are recording issues of the complainant's age being documented or passed on to CEOP. Therefore it is unknown whether age makes a difference to whether reports are made directly to CEOP or Crimestoppers. However, when correlating age with reporting via the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button it is apparent that reports to CEOP using this method are more likely to be made by children aged between 11 and 16 years.

### Reports by age of complainant

As seen in previous Strategic Overviews, the most common age of a complaint reporting abuse via the 'ClickCEOP' advice and report button is still including and between the ages of 11 and 16 years old with 13, 14 and 15 year-olds being the highest and in that order. This does not mean that all reports are actually made by these age groups but includes those reported by another about a child in these age groups. This is also the case when the complainant age is considered by reporting agency, therefore for the purposes of this report age will not be further investigated. Further development is required on the recording of the reporting persons details and should perhaps distinguish whether the reporting person is a victim or reporting on behalf of another.



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