



Working in partnership

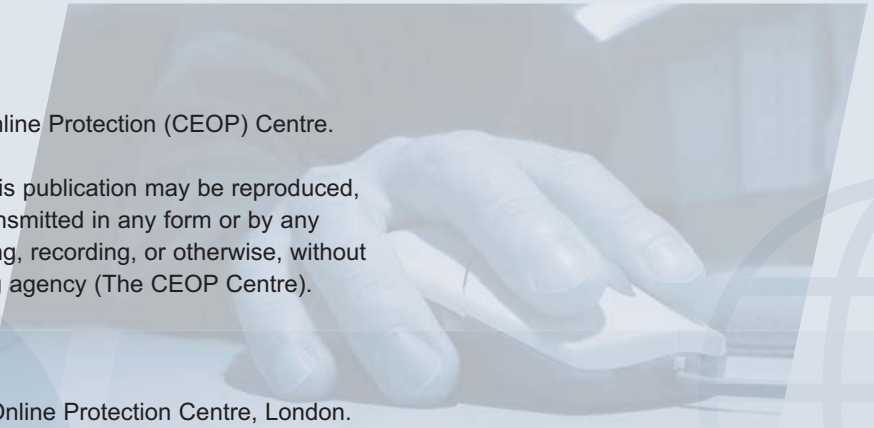
– CEOP principles on reporting online child sexual exploitation

August 2007



Making every child matter ... everywhere





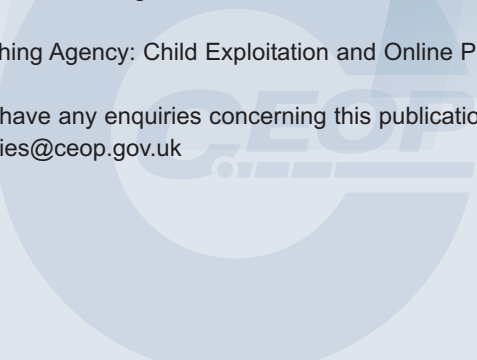
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If you have any enquiries concerning this publication, please contact:
enquiries@ceop.gov.uk



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Background and Purpose

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1** The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre has the legal remit and authority for tackling child sexual exploitation within the UK, both in the online and offline worlds. It aims to become the UK national centre of excellence for this area of work. It is also a founder member of the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT); the principle vehicle for international strategy and law enforcement action in this area of criminality.
- 1.2** CEOP is set up to deal with reported allegations and suspicions of any online or offline activity or behaviour that suggests a child or young person is being sexually abused by an adult or is at potential risk of such abuse. For these purposes a child is someone under the age of 18, as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Examples of the types of reports that CEOP encourages is attached at Annex A to this document; these are not designed to be legal definitions, but simply an illustration.
- 1.3** The welfare of the child or young person is paramount and is central to all of the work at the CEOP Centre.
- 1.4** The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is responsible for reports and action to deal with illegal content discovered on the internet. CEOP signposts and redirects relevant reports to the IWF. Similarly, the IWF provides CEOP with relevant information and intelligence.
- 1.5** Currently, CEOP does not have the authority or the resources to deal with other forms of child abuse, such as bullying, harassment or racial abuse.
- 1.6** Policy and operational implementation for reporting mechanisms in this crime area and subsequent activity in relation to child sexual exploitation has been delegated by the Home Office to the CEOP Centre, with ministerial agreement.
- 1.7** The purpose of this document is to outline the CEOP Centre's principles on the accurate and timely reporting of suspicious activity online where it concerns the sexual exploitation of children and young people.



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2. Reporting Sources

2.1 There are a number of ways that information about online child sexual abuse is provided to the CEOP Centre.

Principally these are:

- Public reporting – through the online ‘Report Abuse’ mechanism, as well as by telephone and written communications.
- Industry reporting – where the online, mobile or financial industries, in the course of conducting their business, uncover suspicious behaviour/communications that may be indicative of online child sexual abuse or it is brought to their attention by an employee or service users.
- Referrals from law enforcement or child protection organisations, nationally and internationally.



Handling Reports

3. Handling Reports

- 3.1** CEOP is structured into three faculties; each inter-dependant on each other to help achieve CEOP's overall aim, as well as the set of objectives communicated through its business plan.
- 3.2** The three faculties are:
- Intelligence
 - Operations
 - Harm Reduction
- 3.3** CEOP is intelligence-led in a number of ways. Firstly, by professional analysis of reports into the Centre, intelligence disseminations and operational deployments are informed and targeted. Secondly, the future direction and scope of the Harm Reduction faculty is directly influenced. CEOP is an organisation that seeks to continually learn from what has taken place and works to put in place measures that will help prevent those incidents from occurring in the future.
- 3.4** Good quality information and simple mechanisms that allow people – public, industry or otherwise – to report to CEOP is a key element of ensuring the success of that approach.
- 3.5** Reports may be about one or many individuals; they may be about actual instances of grooming; or they may be simply about incidences of high risk behaviour by children, which may leave them vulnerable to approaches by sexual predators. Each report is different and requires a different response. It is because of this that it is important that these reports are analysed and assessed by appropriately trained staff, such as police and child protection professionals, with the appropriate authority to take action if necessary.
- 3.6** All reports made online to CEOP receive an automated response acknowledging receipt of that report and informing the author that someone from CEOP will contact them, if that is deemed necessary and appropriate. All reports from someone under 18 are followed up and a reply sent.
- 3.7** Those who wish to make reports that are extremely urgent are advised to report directly to their local police force, using the '999' procedure, or appropriate agency if outside of the UK.
- 3.8** Each report received by the Centre is risk assessed by professionally trained analysts to determine the course of action required and whether an urgent response is needed. This risk assessment informs whether a child is at immediate risk from sexual abuse and whether an urgent dissemination to a law enforcement or child protection agency is required. Working alongside those analysts are child protection staff from the NSPCC who help ensure that safeguarding of the child is put at the very heart of that assessment process.

“ Each report is different and requires a different response. It is because of this that it is important that these reports are analysed and assessed by appropriately trained staff ”

Handling Reports

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- 3.9** Where a child is deemed not to be at immediate risk of sexual abuse, the report is developed into an intelligence package, which is either disseminated to local/international law enforcement agencies for investigation or is passed to CEOP's Operations faculty for their action. Each report is assessed on a case by case basis to determine who is best placed to progress this. Where a package is disseminated, CEOP provides ongoing support and guidance to the officers working that case to help ensure the best possible outcome.
- 3.10** All other reports, which require advice or guidance for children or parents around internet safety, for example, are passed to Harm Reduction staff. This faculty has access to qualified child protection staff who can provide specialist support, where this is necessary and appropriate.
- 3.11** All reports are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For UK reports (made directly through the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism) coverage 'out of hours' in the evenings and at weekends, is provided by Crimestoppers, if urgent action is required.
- 3.12** CEOP does not accept anonymous reports. Such reports are directed to Crimestoppers for handling and using agreed procedures and protocols. Staff at Crimestoppers are trained and have the appropriate skills to deal with this aspect of reporting and will refer any appropriate reports back to CEOP for action.
- 3.13** Children who may need advice or support before making a report are directed to Childline or the There4me website. An adult seeking the same is directed to the NSPCC helpline.



“Where a child is deemed not to be at immediate risk of sexual abuse, the report is developed into an intelligence package, which is either disseminated to local/international law enforcement agencies for investigation or is passed to CEOP's operational faculty for their action”

4. Public Reporting

4.1 In order to maximise the benefits of all reports concerning online child sexual exploitation into a single agency, CEOP encourages the public, particularly children and young people, to report directly to it. There are a number of important reasons for this:

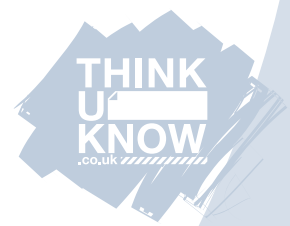
- These are potential crimes and the proper place to report them is a law enforcement agency. For example, a stolen car would be reported to the police, not the manufacturer.
- CEOP is best placed to analyse, assess and take appropriate action at the right time according to the perceived risk and threat to an individual child, assisted through its links with law enforcement and child protection services, nationally and internationally.
- Those reporting can receive clear and consistent advice about how to protect themselves from this type of behaviour.
- It enables feedback on reports to be given to industry partners to help firstly, make their environments safer for children and young people, and secondly more hostile for sexual predators.
- Information and intelligence from these reports will help inform future investigations and shape the future direction and priorities for CEOP in all areas of its work.

4.2 Currently, CEOP does not seek to receive reports directly from the public, or indeed industry, about other forms of online abuse, such as bullying or harassment. As currently structured and resourced, it does not intend to be a 'clearing house' for such reports. Any such reports that it does receive are redirected to those agencies that can deal with them appropriately.

4.3 CEOP will ensure clarity with the public about the types of reports it wants to receive through:

- The ThinkUKnow education programme (which has engaged with one million secondary-school age children and young people between 2006-07) and public awareness campaigns, supported by online resources.
- Working with industry partners – to ensure that the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism is placed and contextualised in prominent positions within environments that children and young people occupy online.
- Having clear messages and signposting on the ThinkUKnow, CEOP and VGT websites is essential. Moreover, ensuring that the reporting forms are as child friendly as possible is vital to guarantee sufficient and accurate information from which CEOP analysts can make a proper assessment of risk and priority.
- Working with relevant parties, including CEOP's Youth Advisory Panel, to ensure that the reporting mechanism and associated advice and guidance is contemporary, credible and child-friendly, as well as 'fit for purpose'.

“ CEOP is best placed to analyse, assess and take appropriate action at the right time according to the perceived risk and threat to an individual child ”



Public Reporting

4. Public Reporting

4.4 In terms of the mechanism for reporting child sexual exploitation itself, CEOP believe that the following principles should apply:

- The CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' button should be used for any link to making a report about online child sexual exploitation to law enforcement. Through the ThinkUKnow education programme and public awareness campaigns, it will become a recognised icon amongst children, young people and adults. Using other formats or terminology will only act to confuse the public and lead to inaccurate or incomplete reports which could potentially place a child or young person at risk.
- The 'Report Abuse' button must link directly through to the CEOP/VGT reporting pages. A URL will be provided by CEOP.
- The 'Report Abuse' button should be placed in a prominent position and contextualised within online spaces that children and young people occupy, and where the threat of sexual abuse is manifest.
- CEOP recognises that each online service is different and that a singular approach is not always appropriate. Therefore, CEOP will work individually with each organisation that adopts the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism, to ensure that it is situated in the most appropriate place in their online environment.



5. Role of Industry

- 5.1** The CEOP Centre believe that the online industry has a vital role to play in helping to protect children and young people who use their services. CEOP actively encourages all organisations that have an online presence where children and young people congregate, to adopt the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism.
- 5.2** Adopting the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' icon is not designed to replace existing reporting mechanisms within online environments, e.g. reporting breaches of 'terms and conditions' etc. It is intended to deal with specific threats from specific individuals who seek to use the online environment to access children and young people for sexual purposes. It offers service users, particularly children and young people, the choice to report directly to law enforcement where they feel that this is appropriate.
- 5.3** The presence of the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism is designed to send out powerful messages. Firstly, that the children and young people using that online space are empowered to report suspicious individuals or behaviour to law enforcement quickly and easily. Secondly, that sexual predators who see the 'Report Abuse' icon, know that those children and young people are empowered to report them, and therefore, will be deterred from using that website for their abhorrent activities.
- 5.4** Just as it is vital for the public to be able to report directly to CEOP, it is equally important for industry to be able to report directly to CEOP about concerns or behaviour that they come across in the course of their work or where a service user reports such behaviour or activity directly to them. A series of workshops was held in 2006 with industry partners on how best to facilitate this and work is ongoing to provide a secure method to pass this information to CEOP. In the meantime online and mobile providers have an email address they can use.
- 5.5** Some industry partners may have concerns about reports that are sent directly to CEOP about online behaviour or activity within their environment, but on which they are not sighted. CEOP recognises those concerns and, while CEOP will not support the idea of industry acting as a filter for or vetting of any reports from children or young people, we do appreciate that feedback about those reports should be made available to industry. Reports will be provided to those providers that have adopted the CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' button or where there are significant numbers of reports from a particular service.
- 5.6** Feedback is necessary and entirely appropriate in order to allow industry to take action to deal with behaviour that is inappropriate and may have breached 'terms and conditions of use'. It also provides a platform for CEOP to work with industry partners, individually and collectively, to make those environments safer in the future.

“ Just as it is vital for the public to be able to report directly to CEOP, it is equally important for industry to be able to report directly to CEOP about concerns or behaviour that they come across in the course of their work ”

Welcome on board ...

5.7 Feedback will be achieved in a number of ways for those industry partners that have adopted CEOP/VGT 'Report Abuse' mechanism:

- Operationally – when a report is received which requires action, the relevant industry partners will be contacted for further information, within the established UK legal framework (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Data Protection Act, etc), to help identify, locate and safeguard a child who is at risk, as well as secure evidence needed to pursue the offender(s). This is facilitated through the single point of contact process.
- Exploring the potential to refer any reports back to the service provider which are not suitable for action by CEOP or another agency, but which may have breached 'terms and conditions of use' for that industry provider.
- Ad-hoc arrangements with the industry individually and collectively where an immediate threat or problem has been identified and requires either bespoke work or a collective programme of action.
- Exploring how to provide regular feedback to industry partners on the types of reports received, potential weaknesses in systems processes identified and other relevant information, through the CEOP Centre's 'safer by design' function. This information will be anonymised so that those reporting or who are the subjects of such reports cannot be identified. Information about a particular service provider will not be shared with another service provider.
- Access to the CEOP's Strategic Overview of the online environment, which will contain generic information about intelligence gained from reports within the previous year.

Annex A

Examples of the type of online reports received into the CEOP Centre

- Adults encouraging children and young people to meet up with them in the 'real' world with the intention of engaging them in sexual activity;
- Attempted or actual instances of sexual grooming by an adult of a child or young person, including adults who pretend to be their peers in order to facilitate this;
- Concerns that a child or young person is being coerced or blackmailed into engaging with online or offline sexual activity with an adult;
- Inappropriate sexual language or conversations between a child or young person and an adult;
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour between a child or young person and an adult, such as performing sexual acts on a webcam;
- Instances of online high-risk behaviour by children or young people, which could make them vulnerable to sexual predators, such as posting too much personal information or explicit and provocative text/images.



