

The application of technology in policing when tackling child sexual exploitation online.

‘Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse... children or young people may be tricked into believing they’re in a loving, consensual relationship.’ (NSPCC, undated)

Children aged from 12 to 15 have on average 272 ‘friends’ on their social networking sites, 29 percent of whom they have never met. 33 percent of these children also communicate with people whom they do not directly know using social media (HMIC, 2015).



Technology designed to tackle CSE example:

Thorn: Thorn is an organisation founded in 2012 by Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher which builds technology to defend children from sexual abuse. They make connections with tech companies and law enforcement. So far they have helped identify 5,894 children that have been victims of CSE both online and in sex trafficking. This organisation focuses on Internet technology and the role it plays in facilitating child pornography and sexual slavery of children around the world (Thorn, undated).

The rising use of technology means that online child sexual exploitation is on the rise, but it also means that evidence is easier to gather from mobile phones and internet history. To extract data, forces need to have the available forensic mobile equipment that allows them to quickly assess the scale of the offence, this approach allows officers to distinguish more serious from less serious offending, and accord priority to inquiries and safeguarding activity: often referred to as ‘triage’ capacity (HMIC, 2015).

Staffordshire Police had provided multi-agency training on child sexual exploitation to 300 practitioners—including online child sexual exploitation and e-safety training for schools.

The HMIC have recommended that the forces ensure that those who are involved in, and supervise online child sexual exploitation investigations are able to access relevant information as and when required, maximising the use of current and planned IT systems.

References

HMIC, 2015. *Online and on the edge: Real risks in a virtual world*, s.l.: Justice Inspectorates.

NSPCC, undated. *Child sexual exploitation*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/> [Accessed 17 April 2018].

Thorn, undated. *Thorn is a uniquely equipped non-profit.* [Online]

Available at: <https://www.wearethorn.org/about-our-fight-against-sexual-exploitation-of-children/> [Accessed 20 April 2018].