Online Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment and Harmful Digital Behaviour - Exploring and Understanding Current Challenges

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16.9.2023

A little about me

- 2002 - 2012 Barrister - specialising in children's rights and child sexual abuse

- 2013 - 2015 Legal Consultant

- 2016 - 2017 IJM CSE Advisor

  - Trained in online CP

- 2018 Founded Cybersafe Scotland

- 2019 - 2023 Chair: Child Exploitation Group

- 2023 Launched new CSE Guidance

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- **<u>Mission: to keep all children safe online</u>**

- **Respected and Safe Online (2021 -)**

  - Intensive support model

  - Universal and Targeted support

  - Schools assessed on basis of need

  - 5,000 families across LOIP areas

  - Currently expanding

3 reasons online child protection can feel difficult or overwhelming

1. Scale - so many online spaces, different behaviour patterns, different rules different settings, different risks, different opportunities

2. Skills and knowledge gap
- we are using technology differently much of the time,
- we are using different technology much of the time,
- even when we are using the same technology the same way - we are still seeing different things

3. Pace of change

+ additional layers

Additional layers

- Some experience a sense of frustration about the limitations of what can sometimes do in this space?
- Limitations around much can influence what is happening?
- Feelings of being restricted in relation to parents or inaction by or poor understanding amongst parents
  - (Parents frequently not aware unless there is an incident)
- Sometimes these relate to our experiences of the scale of harm/level of harm - how these interact with the levels of trauma we are seeing in other ways.
- Sometimes they relate to inadequate responses from the tech companies
- Sometimes they relate to multi agency difficulties - information sharing issues or inconsistent responses.

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when people are frightened or overwhelmed they take less action.

Experiences - Starter for 10

1. I deal with a lot of cyberbullying. They pretend to be all friendly. Come and join this Snapchat group. Then ridiculing. Then blocking them.
2. They know certain pupils that have additional support needs. They whip out their phone and pretend they are filming a video knowing it will cause distress doing that.
3. Sexting would be up there. We do a lot of educating around it but children are still either not aware of the laws or don't fully understand how they apply to them or their consequences.
4. Sexualised content is probably talked about more in class. But they think things are funny that are actually serious.
5. Staff can deal quite well with things if they find out. The problem is they don't find out most of the time.
6. A lot of these situations start with smaller incidents that I worry we do not record. Then we look back and see a pattern.
7. We see technology being used really positively in school as well. Even using google translate for the Ukrainian children. But it is a difficult balance.
8. Basic health impacts around tech concern me - the impact on sleep (particularly with children with additional needs) and even eye sight
9. Body image and self esteem - it's having an impact on boys as well as girls.
10. I know I need to be really curious about their online world and know as much as I can about that world. I need to keep reminding myself how alone children feel with this.

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Breakout Groups (8 min)

Questions

What is the most common online harm that you encounter?

How often do you have to deal with incidents that involve online abuse, harassment (which can involve bullying or sexual harassment) or exploitation?

How often do you have to handle incidents involving peer to peer image sharing?

Have you ever had to handle incidents involving peer to adult image sharing?

Have you dealt with these situations involving male students?

During the last 12 months have you dealt with an incident (or a series of incidents along a theme) involving online harm, online CSE or abuse and harassment online that really challenged you?

If so, why was it challenging?

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Roundup (2 min)

Around your table are there any common themes emerging as to what you have recently experienced and what is especially challenging?

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Feedback from Groups (10 min)

Are there any common themes emerging as to what
you have recently experienced and what is especially challenging?

Insights from Respected and Safe Online

Children want to talk about their experiences online but most will never speak unprompted about any negative experience that has happened online.

Certain online harms are increasing and prevalent:
exposure to adult material (porn links and content amongst girls and boys),
exposure to and impact of exposure to adult language and behaviour
and online harassment (normalisation of girls - and some boys - being approached by people they do not know).

Patterns of using porn and adult sexual material for the desensitivisation of children in CSE cases

For some children, their online space is safer or more supportive than their home space.

Importance of reporting

Importance of adults being bold in identifying harm where it has been normalised.

Many children had experience of very limited parental response to any sharing of incidents

Curiosity is our greatest tool!

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Think of each child's digital space in layers

Where are they (which apps/games)?
What are they seeing or experiencing?
Who is in there? (Who is in that pub etc)?
What level of risk do they present?
How are they interacting directly with the child (if at all - is the child
just watching them or engaging with them)?
Or are they indirect influencing - e.g. celeb or other influencer.
What are the factors that already exist to protect them in that space? Peers, user tools etc.

Use open questions
You don't need to be an expert, you just need to be interested.

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Staying in Touch

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