

Webinar recording



**Where's the harm? Protecting children from online sexual abuse and risk in the age of artificial intelligence**

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# Where's the harm? Protecting children from online sexual abuse and risk in the age of artificial intelligence

## Transcript

### Featuring

#### Chair:

**Claire Burns**, Director, CELCIS

#### Speakers:

**John Carr, OBE**

**Valeriia Soloveva**, Specialist Researcher with Protect Children

**Mariya Kraft**, Internet Content Analyst, Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

CB

#### Claire Burns

Good morning, everybody and welcome to today's webinar, the sixth in the current series of the Emerging Insights webinars with a focus on AI and children's social care. Lovely to see so many people with us this morning. I'm Claire Burns, the Director of [CELCIS](#), and we really appreciate everyone giving their time to step into this learning space with us, but I think we will all agree it's a really critical learning space that we

all need to be in. In our previous series, we explored emerging issues in child protection and then we shared key learning and themes that underpinned the findings from our own children's services reform research study. This particular series is on what AI might mean for children's social care, the services developed and practises used to respond to the care and protection needs of children. In today's webinar – **“Where's the Harm? Protecting children from online sexual abuse and risk in the age of artificial intelligence”**, We'll explore what the growing use of AI means for keeping children safe from harm and preventing sexual abuse. AI is now deeply embedded in the digital technologies most of us use every day and how these tools are used is rightly under scrutiny, nowhere more so than the realm of child protection. We are delighted to be joined this morning by three excellent international contributors, bringing together expertise and new information to look at where harm and risk is happening, what that looks like in practise and who is experiencing it. We are always aware when we're discussing any of these topics about people's wellbeing on the call, but we're particularly conscious of that today. So given the nature of today's subject matter, it means that we're all very mindful to advise some caution and discretion for us all. This applies to both the conversation today and the information resources that our contributors will be drawing on and they'll be sharing with you. Support for self-care and some signposting information has been shared in the teams and in the information provided in advance of the webinar. Again, I would just say to people, if you need to take a little bit of time out, then please just do that. I'll now introduce our speakers to you. So, our first speaker this morning is [John Carr OBE](#), a leading authority on children and young people's use of the internet and digital technologies. His knowledge and experience come from being a former advisor to [ECPAT International](#), Secretary of the UK's [Children's Charities Coalition on Internet Safety](#), a member of the former UK Council on Child Internet Safety and an advisor to the Council of Europe, the UN and UNICEF. So I think you'll agree, somebody who's in a great place to advise us this morning. John will then be followed by [Valeriia Soloveva](#), specialist researcher with [Protect Children](#). Protect Children is a non-profit, non-governmental, Helsinki-based organisation working internationally advocating for the right of children to be free from sexual violence. Valeriia is co-author of the [CSAM Perpetrator Research Report](#), findings from a survey of a CSAM perpetrators on digital platform use and design for the Ofcom sponsored project, Tell Me More About Tech. And then lastly, Mariya Kraft, Internet

Content Analyst with the [Internet Watch Foundation](#). Mariya is part of the team working at the foundation whose experiences and insights have informed a recently published AI CSAM report for 2026, "[Harm Without Limits: AI Child Sexual Abuse Material through the eyes of our Analysts](#)". So as usual, we'll be hearing from the contributors. You'll hear from them each and then we'll go into a panel discussion, and we'll be taking questions from you all as well. So, without further ado, I'm going to ask John Carr, OBE, to open today's webinar. Thanks, John.

**JC** **John Carr**

Okay, so first thing I want to do is apologise that my Glaswegian accent has long since disappeared. But I did live there, I did go to school there, but then we went back to Yorkshire and that's the explanation. I need to make a declaration of interest. When I first agreed to do this event, it was several months ago, since which time I have been engaged by a number of very famous companies who have a major stake in AI and child protection. I can't name them yet, but there will be an announcement in the next week or so. So I thought I'd better mention that because if you see the announcement and see my name linked to it, you might wonder why I didn't say anything about it this morning. And in a way, that's a neat introduction to one of the issues that we will be discussing today, I'm sure, which is not wholly new, but the way in which AI has changed the nature of it, I would argue it is substantially new. And that's the way in which AI tools have enabled people with evil intentions towards children specifically, or who just think it's very funny or a laugh or whatever, to take and manipulate well-known characters, for example, characters in children's books, children's films, children's programs, and change them into quite different entities, performing and doing things that no child should ever have to look at. One can think of, you know, Donald Duck, the Road Runner and so on, who if you send your child onto the internet or you give them a task as a teacher or whatever that might involve them searching for or finding materials relating to these very familiar, very comforting children's characters. And they're then confronted with images of these characters doing things which were never intended - completely age inappropriate. Well, of course, the companies who own these characters and have invested a great deal of money, in some cases, billions of dollars over the years, are very concerned about it because it's undermining trust and confidence in their brand. They don't want parents, they don't want teachers to have to think twice about allowing or asking their children to engage with these characters on the internet for fear that

the children might be forced to confront situations, you know, beheadings, sexual acts, whatever it might be, being engaged in by these characters because of the obvious commercial damage that that would do to the brands, but also because the people in these companies are very child oriented, very child focused. They just don't want that kind of thing to be happening and being linked to their brand. So this coalition of intellectual property right owners, I suppose, would be the best way of describing them, are going to be initiating a great deal of activity, pressing for the companies that own the AI tools in particular, to introduce greater safeguards, to try to ensure that copyright theft isn't facilitated in the way that currently it is. And part of their argument, and I acknowledge it is only part of their argument, is the risks to children that these tools are creating because of the way in which they allow familiar characters, familiar to children, to be manipulated and distorted in ways that were never, ever intended. Now, as I said earlier, I thought that this was not wholly new because things like this had happened before, many, many years ago in the early days of the internet. But AI, like in so many other ways, has put the whole thing on steroids. The scale and speed at which this type of abuse, this kind of copyright theft, which has harmful implications for children, the AI tools have changed the scale and therefore the nature of the challenge. I don't know if any of you have seen this clip. It was originally a kind of promotional clip for an AI tool called Sora, which has since been withdrawn. But if you've seen it, they did a demo. And in this demo somebody typed in plain text - so in other words, no coding skills were required, no special technical knowledge was required - somebody simply typed into the AI program. "Could you create a scene of a town in California in the 19th century during the Gold Rush". And not very long after those simple words had been typed into the programme, you saw a video which was, in my opinion at any rate, barely distinguishable from the finest film productions that Hollywood's been capable of producing, you know, for example, in Westerns. So, the power of these tools and their facility, the ease with which people can use them, and the quality of the material that they can produce at the other end is truly, truly astonishing and opens, as I say, to people without any degree or level of technical knowledge. My first real engagement with this issue of AI and children was about, I think, four years ago when I was hired by a children's group based in Bulgaria, who I'd worked with before when I was an advisor to ACPA International, which is a global NGO based in Bangkok. And this group in Bulgaria was running a project, this is very exotic, in Greece, and Serbia. So, it was truly a Balkan project. And these

were three children's organisations, one in Serbia, one in Greece, being run by a children's organisation in Bulgaria, and they were researching the use of chat bots. Chat bots which were directed at children who had got in trouble with the police or got in trouble with the legal system in one way or another in their respective countries and perhaps didn't want to engage or hadn't got the wherewithal or the means or the knowledge to engage a lawyer to help them navigate their way through the legal issues or the court appearances or whatever it might be that were about to confront them, and wanted to be able to get information about the processes and about what they were going to have to face as the prosecution or whatever it might be or the youth custody order was coming up. And there was no doubt in the minds of these children's organisations in Serbia and Greece that the chat bots could perform a very useful function for children who essentially didn't have access to any other forms of support or help for whatever reason. But what also became clear was that the complexity of the situations that many of these children and young people were having to face as they were approaching a court appearance or having to go to the police station again for whatever reason, the complexity of the situations that they were facing were incredibly broad and that simple chat bots that responded to questions like what are the potential sentences, what's the process when you get to court and things like that. They certainly were useful or could be useful, but they were in no sense adequate or sufficient to meet the needs of a great many of the children that were likely to be engaging with the youth justice system. So since then, I mean, I think it was three or four years ago when I went on that project and went to Sophia in Bulgaria to present my final report on the work that they'd done. But since then, of course, we've seen the way in which chat bots and the chat facilities that AI tools can facilitate increasing power exponentially. So now we've had cases where we know children have been engaging with a chatbot and developing a deeply, what they feel at any rate, is a deeply personal and emotional connection with this thing. And they believe, in essence, that they are talking to a real human being, a real person who is always empathetic, who is always on their side, who is always kind of pointing them in what they think is the right direction. Of course, it can never be the case that it's a genuine relationship of any real kind. And in the end, that reality will come crashing in on that child with goodness knows what else or what other rather emotional or personal complications that might arise from it.

I write a lot about a whole range of things, not always connected with technology, and I sometimes use different AI tools. If I get to a lumpy bit of my text or whatever, and I know it could be expressed better. I'll copy the paragraph or sometimes a bit more than that into an AI tool, ChatGPT, Co-Pilot or Claude or one of those, and ask them if they could suggest a way in which I could smooth out some of the lumps in the text. It always, always comes back and says, "This is masterful. This is a brilliant insight into whatever it might be". They never say anything negative. They never, well, very rarely, put it that way, do they say anything negative. They're always going to try to want to keep me feeling, you know, and you might have guessed I am an adult, they always want to keep me feeling that I'm on their side, I'm rooting for them, they're helping me steer a course to achieve whatever it is that I appear to want to achieve. And so, if you're a child with no real experience of the complexities of these things, you can see how potentially it can be extremely damaging or dangerous. But the reason I haven't done a PowerPoint today is because I'm pretty rubbish at speaking to them. I've done one and you'll get it later if you want it. And by the way, I did it with the help of Claude, and it was very good. I mean, I couldn't fault it, so I hope you'll find it useful. But it's very dense with facts about things, which is another reason why I didn't want to use it as a basis for a talk today. If I leave you with this, with this thought. Again, because of my great age, I have this overwhelming sense of Deja vu all over again. Where we are with AI is very, very reminiscent of where we were in the early days of the internet. Politicians and governments didn't want to appear to be Luddite or didn't want to appear to be uncool. And the internet companies had marketed themselves as somewhere between Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa. They were going to change the world for the better. Everything was going to be improved because their tools were going to help make the world a better place. And these technical tools, the internet as it was emerging, it was going to bring in new investment, new jobs, new tax revenues, and of course, with the lobbying power of the companies as well, governments felt constrained to leave these companies alone. And the companies also, as part of their marketing strategy, managed to convince people that free speech and innovation were critical, important values in a liberal democracy. And any attempt to regulate them, any attempt to impose rules on them was a threat to free speech, was a threat to innovation. And for all of these reasons and probably others, governments backed off. In fact, not only

did they back off, but they also created special laws, particularly in the United States, where Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 gave them special legal protection and privileges to make them, as it were, it allowed them to take their foot off the gas. They didn't have to worry about safety. They didn't have to worry about a whole range of liability issues because they were given legal protection from them. Happily, that is now changing. We won't be fooled again, to quote the famous line from one of The Who's most famous records.

LEGAL & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### Current Protections and Their Limits

Existing UK Frameworks	Critical Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online Safety Act 2023 — platform duties to protect children</li><li>• Protection of Children Act 1978 — criminalises CSAM</li><li>• Sexual Offences Act 2003 — grooming and exploitation offences</li><li>• GDPR/ UK GDPR — Age Appropriate Design Code</li><li>• Investigatory Powers Act — surveillance powers</li><li>• Children Act 1989/2004 — duty to safeguard</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AI-generated CSAM not clearly covered under existing law</li><li>• Jurisdictional complexity — AI platforms often overseas</li><li>• Reactive legislation vs. rapidly evolving AI capabilities</li><li>• No mandatory AI impact assessments for children</li><li>• Underresourced enforcement — NCMEC, IWF overwhelmed</li><li>• Definitional challenges around 'harm' in synthetic content</li></ul>

We now have legislation in the United Kingdom. We have legislation in the European Union. We all know about the experiment going on in Australia. And I think in principle, we are definitely in a much stronger and better place to confront the risks that AI is presenting to children in particular. And the question now is how efficiently the regulators, in the case of the United Kingdom, Ofcom, can do the job that Parliament has given them and which parents expect. Because AI is in several ways much more powerful, potentially as a creator of harm for children than the internet was in its early days. But can I just end by saying it also has great potential to help children. AI tools can be extremely efficient at rapidly identifying problems and facilitating interventions. We haven't seen that yet on a large enough scale, but there is no doubt in my mind from what I know is going on in the industry that a lot of effort is going to that as well. I hope that helps kick off a conversation and I look forward to hearing my other panellists speak. Thank you.

**CB****Claire Burns**

Thanks so much, John. That's a great introduction for us and I particularly found that so helpful just to think about the context you were giving us here about the start of the internet and some of the freedoms. I think that's just such important context for us to keep in mind. So thank you for that. So now I ask our next speaker, Valeriia.

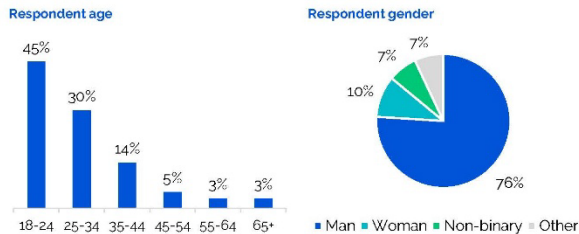
**VS****Valeriia Soloveva**

Well, first of all, it is a pleasure to see so many people joining this webinar. My name is Valeriia. I work as a specialist and a researcher at Protect Children. I will talk a little bit about our organisation just to briefly introduce it and then get straight to the point. Well, Protect Children is a child rights organisation based in Helsinki, Finland, and we work internationally to prevent and end all forms of sexual violence against children. We take this research-based holistic method when addressing sexual violence against children, which means that we just tackle it from multiple angles at the same time through four key areas of our work. So first of all, we support and serve victims and survivors and their families. We organise peer support groups for parents whose children have fallen victim to sexual violence. We host peer support groups for young adult survivors, and we also directly contribute to the removal of child sexual abuse material from the internet. We also educate and empower children at our digital safety skills workshops, and we organise and facilitate trainings for various professionals who directly and indirectly work with children to enhance their abilities to address and understand these crimes. We advocate and amplify strongly both nationally and internationally for the better protection of children. And finally, today, we will be focusing on our 4th key focus area, which is prevention. We believe that child sexual abuse must be prevented before it occurs, before the real child is victimized. Therefore, we focus a lot also on offender-focused intervention and research. And we already started this discussion today that the digital technologies have impacted online crimes of sexual violence against children. Now there is no need for this physical proximity for the offence to take place. And of course, when having this conversation, it's important to keep in mind that online crimes of sexual violence against children are just as serious as those perpetrated in person, and they may impose severe long-term negative consequences on the child, on the whole family as well. Of course, the situation with technology-facilitated crime has exacerbated with the development of the

generative AI, and this is something that we will talk about today. Essentially, protecting children effectively requires a very good understanding of how offenders operate in the digital environment, what technology they use, and this is why we conducted the research that I'm going to be talking about today. In general, we noticed that a lot of research conducted in this field of child protection focuses on offenders that have already been detected. And this is incredibly valuable. However, we also wanted to go further and research these offenders who haven't been identified yet, who are active at the moment, as those are the ones who represent a lot of danger as they're operating right now, and they know how to use the tech. So, for this we developed this very innovative methodology. We have created a survey targeted at active child sexual abuse material offenders who operate online. We have then translated this survey into 24 languages, and we placed it on the dark web. The way this methodology worked is that whenever someone in the dark web would search for child sexual abuse material using one of the indicative keywords, all search results would be blocked and instead the user would be presented with an opportunity to participate in our survey or also links to various help resources. And this proved very effective as in the period between June 2025 and January 2026 around 300,000 people have accessed this survey, and then nearly 50,000 started answering it. The final analytical sample that we added to our final report comprised 20,000 people, so 20,000 child sexual abuse material offenders. The questions of the survey focused on a lot of questions regarding the use of technology. So we asked offenders how they were first exposed to child sexual abuse material, how do they access it right now, what platforms they use, what features in these platforms facilitate their access, what other violent content these offenders engage with, and finally, whether they even encountered any pushback from these platforms that they're using. And before coming to findings, I also wanted to share what we learned about this specific sample. First of all, I just wanted to highlight that the survey was intended for individuals over the age of 18. So, whenever someone would say at the beginning of the survey that they are under the age of 18, they would be immediately forwarded to the end survey page and sent to help resources. We have also filtered out from the final sample these respondents who said that they were dishonest when responding to our survey in the final honesty cheque question. And we excluded those who have said that they never encountered CSAM.

## Sample Characteristics

**Age & Gender** | Respondents were predominantly young adult men. Three in four (75%) were under 35.



**Education & Employment** | Over a third had completed tertiary education. Six in ten were employed or in education.

**Relationships & Social Life** | Two in three were single. One in four were married or in a relationship. Two in three reported good to excellent social life.

**Physical & Mental Health** | Seven in ten reported good to excellent physical health, and seven in ten reported good to excellent mental health.

**Location & Language** | Respondents were located across all continents, mostly Asia, Europe, and North America. The survey was available in 24 languages, and was mostly answered in English, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

**Note:** Additional demographic questions were optionally offered at the end of the survey. Response rates were substantially lower and may not reflect the full sample.



Most respondents to the survey were young adult men, nearly half of them aged 18 to 24, followed by the second largest age group in the survey, 25 to 34 years old. Most of them said that they were single and they had good to excellent social life. Over 1/3 of these offenders had completed tertiary education and over half were employed or in education at the moment of responding to the survey. And finally, we also asked these respondents to evaluate their physical health and mental health. And in both cases, 7 out of 10 respondents evaluated it as good to excellent. The location of the respondents is unknown. The survey was available to respond globally from any location. However, the largest language groups that we have found in this survey were English-speaking people, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian-speaking people. So, these were the four largest language groups represented in the survey. And of course, a very large section of the survey focused on questions asking offenders about their use of artificial intelligence. And we did find that AI generated CSAM does cause significant harm. It sexualizes and objectifies children. It sustains demand for harmful content. It reinforces very violent and harmful fantasies. It also impacts the investigation work. It impedes the work of child sexual abuse material analysts. In our survey, 35% of this child sexual abuse material offenders have engaged with AI-generated content. So, they have searched for it, they have viewed it, or they have created it. This figure is very likely to be an underestimate as also 61% of offenders said that at this stage, they're uncertain whether they themselves can distinguish content that was altered by AI or the content that was recorded. We also asked in general what kind of AI

generated abusive imagery of children offenders search for, and most of them view completely new and synthetic CSAM, meaning that these were some images or videos that were generated in this text to image models.

FINDING 4: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

## Three in ten respondents reported viewing AI-generated CSAM.

However, this may be understated, as three in five could not distinguish AI-generated imagery.

**Of those who view AI-generated CSAM:**

- 77%** view completely AI-generated CSAM
- 64%** view CSAM created by altering images of real children
- 64%** view CSAM derived from existing CSAM, modified to suite preferences



However, an alarming proportion of respondents, 64%, said that they viewed AI generated CSAM that was created by altering images of real children, and the same proportion said that they were altering videos and images depicting child sexual abuse, meaning that children that have already been depicted in CSAM continued experience in this re-victimization as their videos and images continue to be altered further to feed specific preferences of these offenders. In general, this offender behaviour, it doesn't stop just at viewing. We learned that one in 10 respondents have created AI-generated CSAM at least once. And there are a couple of points to emphasise here that were already briefly touched upon by John.

## One in ten respondents report creating AI-generated CSAM.



### Learning through experimentation

*"learned by myself" "through trial and error" "simple" "nothing to learn" "straightforward" "just tried"*



### Use of multiple easily accessible tools

*"I've used a lot of different websites to create AI-generated CSAM." "multiple tools" "various image generators" "a lot of different websites" "I searched and clicked on the 1st option"*



### Few barriers or restrictions

*"Unfortunately, it is very easy to find image generators that don't have any restrictions or ones that are easy to bypass."*



First of all, the respondents underscored that there is little to no technical knowledge that is needed in order to create this material. They described the process as simple, nothing to learn, straightforward, something they just tried, and it worked out. Another thing that respondents shared was that there is an abundance of tools available, and most of these tools were found simply by searching for it in the search bar and then clicking on the first option. And finally, there were little to no barriers, and those barriers that existed were easy to circumvent, again, according to the respondents in the survey. We also identified the large commercial element that was forming around AI generated child sexual abuse material. 19% of our total sample said that they were involved in commissioning or producing CSAM, which also includes paying for it and receiving payments.

## Respondents warn of risks of escalation linked to AI-CSAM.

Respondents warned about significant risks related to AI-CSAM, with some describing it as a “*gateway*”, potentially escalating fantasies into action.

*“AI opens the door to even healthier fantasies and therefore increases the risks of translating them into action”.*

*“Eventually the novelty wears off and you need to see the real thing.”*



And most importantly, respondents themselves emphasised the risks related to using AI generated imagery. They often described it as this gateway drug. One of the respondents saying that the novelty eventually will wear off and then the need to see the real thing will grow. And another respondent also shared that AI does open the door to even healthier fantasies. Our other research did find a strong correlation between viewing child sexual abuse material and contacting children. Therefore, we just cannot ignore the danger that is created by AI generated content in here. So overall AI generated CSAM does always harm children and it brings real danger. It has this very high potential of escalating into more severe offences and into contacting children. We also see in the data that the use of AI may be higher than what the data suggests because nowadays this volume of very photo-realistic content does continue to grow. There are little to no barriers at the moment to creating this material, unfortunately. And we also see this AI generated CSAM economy forming. So, it's not just a standalone, it's not generated individually. It is exchanged, it is modified, it is monetized and commodified and it creates this very strong incentive for the creation of more material and sometimes even more extreme material. And overall, we do understand it's a very significant threat and we need to focus now on addressing it and we need to advocate for this robust child safety by design approach when developing any new technology and installing embedding this safety by design and also in everything that exists at the moment. And of course, we also need this very timely and effective interventions that would identify offenders at the moment of risk and

would prevent their behaviour. And we have found that even this survey did make a difference as offenders were interrupted at the moment of searching for CSAM. They took part in the survey, they were made to reflect on their behaviour, and at the end, around 2,000 respondents did click on our help resources that were attached at the end. And it's always very challenging presenting these results, as it does leave very heavy feeling on what else needs to be done and what in general can we do to better protect children and to finish on a more hopeful note perhaps.



**Explore the findings in full.**

[www.protectchildren.fi/en/post/tmat-csam-perpetrator-research-report](https://www.protectchildren.fi/en/post/tmat-csam-perpetrator-research-report)

I would also like to briefly introduce other projects where Protect Children works to address specifically image-based crimes. Well, first of all, we have this You Are Enough peer support groups for parents whose children have fallen victim to sexual violence, and we have these groups for different types of crimes, for example, sibling sexual abuse or image based crimes that we have discussed today as well. And we did find that supporting parents also facilitates the recovery of the whole family. And the reason why I'm mentioning these groups is because they initially were established in Finland, but at the moment, they're also running in the UK, also in Ireland and in Latvia, with more countries coming soon. We're also about to launch this new learning platform for parents, where parents will learn essential digital safety skills and also how to pass these skills to their children to stay safe online. This project will launch next month. It is called More Than a Device and it will be launched first in the UK too. And finally, at the moment, we're also preparing a new research that is targeting survivors because we also want to ask directly from survivors of these crimes, about their experiences, if they want to share

anything, anything we don't know about the crime in order to learn how to prevent it better. And the links to all of these projects will be shared later by the fantastic webinar organisers. So thank you so much. I hope I did not run over time and didn't overwhelm you with information.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thanks, Valeriia. I think what an incredible input that you were able to just summarise so much complex information there in 15 minutes and such a powerful input as well. I think everybody will be quite taken aback by the numbers that you're talking about, but also that we have to understand perpetrators and the characteristics of that in order to be able to respond effectively. I would imagine there's going to be lots of questions coming through for you, but I think you're really helping us in the next bit think about how do we understand this better, but actually how do we respond to it in a positive way and I can really hear some of the work you've been involved in supporting families. So, we will move on, but lots for us to think about and lots to come back to. Thank you. Mariya, over to you now.

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Thanks for having me. My name is Mariya and I work for the Internet Watch Foundation. I want to say a huge thanks to John and Valeriia. Everything you said really resonated with me. I think there will be some overlap. Hopefully that's not an issue. So today I'll briefly tell you about what we do, and then I'll try and focus on some of the key harms that we're seeing in the hotline right now in connection with artificial intelligence. Due to the nature of our work, I think my talks can leave people feeling a bit hopeless and depressed sometimes. So today I will really try and focus on what you can do and what resources are out there for you. So perhaps you'll feel more empowered rather than terrified. That's my hope anyway. I have passed on some useful links that the organisers will share with you. So, the Internet Watch Foundation is a UK-based charity. Our office is in Cambridge and since 1996 we've been working really hard to make the internet a safer place. We identify and remove child sexual abuse images online. We run an anonymous hotline. So, the public and professionals can report harmful content to us. We work really closely with UK law enforcement and actually international law enforcement and with tech companies around the world to help us remove the material and stop the spread. One important thing about the IWF that you need to know is that

we are the only non-law enforcement organisation in the UK that is permitted to proactively search for this kind of material. And that's really important. It means we're not just responding to harms, we're also identifying new emerging threats sometimes before they become widely recognised. So to give you an idea of scale, in 2025, our analysts processed over 450,000 reports. It means we looked at an image every 70 seconds, roughly. But of course, volume is not really that important. It's the patterns that we see within that volume, because they can really tell us where the risks are changing. I've been an analyst here for the past six years. We're a small team, with only 15 of us, and we all share our core duties, but we also have additional projects and areas of interest, and mine is AI generated child sexual abuse. And that's why I'm here today. AI, in my opinion, has been the most significant change that we've recently seen in the hotline in terms of the online risk landscape. Most people are now familiar with generative AI, you know, tools that can generate images, videos, text. They're actually really hard to avoid. Even if you make an effort to not use LLMs like Claude or ChatGPT or Gemini, AI is now just embedded in the infrastructure of about everything we do. You know, you use maps, we use search engines that are powered by AI. Even your choice of TV you're watching in the evening may be influenced by AI algorithms. But when people talk about AI generated images, I think they still hold the misconception that it is, for the lack of a better word, slop. You know, that is something really crude, something easily identifiable, you know, it's people with extra fingers. Well, actually, it's not. Based on the images that we see in the hotline today, this couldn't be further from the truth. I personally saw my first AI generated images of children back in 2023, and they were not convincing at all. They were really clumsy, looked like pretty poor attempts at creating an image of a sexually posed child. But that changed so, so quickly. In 2024, we started seeing images of a completely different calibre. All of a sudden, they were a lot more realistic and they were becoming so complex as well. So, when in the beginning, we just saw an image of one child, now we were suddenly seeing images of realistic sexual acts with multiple participants, with detailed backgrounds, for example. In 2025, we saw yet another leap in quality and we watched our first AI generated CSAM videos spread online. That year we saw record numbers. We had a 14% increase in the overall AI generated content numbers, but actually the increase in videos was just insane. It was a 260-fold increase. So basically, we saw the birth of AI generated child sexual abuse video in 2025. So, it's now 2026 and what are we seeing now? Well, images are realistic enough to fool an

analyst with decades of experience. We're seeing highly realistic videos with audio. We're seeing creators gaining notoriety both on the clear web and the dark web, and while some of the children in these videos and images look fully synthetic, actually, the vast majority are based on recognisable children. We can tell instantly that mostly they are victims of child sexual abuse. So, offenders seemingly want to create endless new content with the same children who often suffer child sexual abuse for years. For me personally, it's really demoralising to see because it makes me wonder if we'll ever be able to stop pre-victimization. So just to summarize, it's now possible to create highly realistic images of children from scratch. It's also possible to alter existing photos so they look realistic and to do both of those really quickly at scale and with minimal technical knowledge. One harm I'd like to speak about is nudifying apps and deepfake generators. These tools are absolutely abundant online. They come in different shapes and sizes. So, they come in shapes of websites, apps, messenger app bots that are plentiful online. There are very, very few safeguards in place. Normally, there is no age verification typically, no way to confirm consent and the sexual act scenarios that these tools offer quite often look really extreme and degrading. They seem to be mostly geared towards men and boys, you know, offering to create a perfect girlfriend, to undress any woman you want. And actually, it does seem to be a gendered crime because when we look at child sexual abuse images, we assess that 97% of participants in them, or children in them, appear to be females. When it comes to children I think these nudifying apps and deep fake apps seem to be used by peers primarily to bully each other, to prank each other, you know, as ways of banter, I guess. Unfortunately, children don't realise that while it takes them a few seconds to generate that image and share it, it will take us much, much longer to get it removed from the internet. And they also don't realise that they may be criminalising themselves by doing that. So how do we know that children are already using these tools? Well, you may have heard about "[Report Remove](#)". It's a tool that the IWF runs together with Childline in the UK. It allows children to report their images anonymously and the analysts then hash those images. The hashes are shared with law enforcement and our partners without actually sharing the images themselves. And that helps to prevent people from uploading and sharing those images further. In 2025, children who used Report Remove were able to tell us if they think their images have been altered or faked. And last year, 21% of Report Remove reports were marked by reporters as faked. And some of those reports definitely included content

generated with nudifying tools and deep fake generators. Report Remove also made us aware of just how many young people become victims of extortion scammers and criminals. Extortion in general has been on our radar for a very long time. In 2025, we saw Report Remove reports that referenced or had evidence of sexually coerced extortion double. So now around 30% of all report remove reports contain evidence of extortion. The vast majority of them come from teenage boys. And this is not peer on peer abuse. This is Organised crime gangs targeting children all over the world. In 2024, my colleague found an extortion manual shared online with detailed instructions on finding the right child, grooming them, establishing trust, and then ultimately exploiting that trust to blackmail the child. That particular manual suggested that you can actually use AI tools to generate the images if the child wasn't compliant and wasn't going to produce an image themselves. So I think that signals a shift really, while historically safeguarding concerns were mostly around what children are doing, what are they sharing, now they don't need to share anything at all. An image taken in a completely safe context can then be copied, can be manipulated, and ultimately can be turned into something harmful. And I wanted to share a real-life example with you of exactly that. Towards the end of last year in the UK, a secondary school was targeted by offenders who took images of pupils from school website and from social networks. They used AI tools to manipulate those images into sexualized images, and then they sent those images back to the school administration, threatening to release the images unless the school paid. They generated hundreds of images, and the police asked the IWF to assess them. We assessed 150 of them as illegal under UK law. Those were ordinary school photos, you know, images that are shared for positive reasons and the children who were involved in this, they didn't share images themselves, they didn't engage with the offenders, and yet they became victims of very serious harm. This case is described as an emerging threat, and professionals have made it clear that it's likely or that it's expected that we'll see more of crimes like this happening in the coming years. While this is really disturbing and I'm a parent myself and I find this horrible. Actually, there is really good guidance on best practise and how to protect people's images if you work in an educational or residential setting and you have to for work, you know, share images of children. So if you find images being misused, altered, abused, there is really good guidance. It has been developed by UK Online Harms Early Warning Working Group and is shared by [Safe Internet Centre](#). Dealing with cases where the reporter has been blackmailed is really, really

challenging for analysts. You know, young people can often feel extreme fear, shame. There can be risk of self-harm, suicide. And actually, the IWF and Safe Internet Centre both have really good, solid guidance on dealing with extortion. We offer options for children, adults and parents and carers, and that's going to be shared with you as well. If you want to know more about the AI generated CSAM, the IWF together with [NCA](#) (National Crime Agency) actually issued a guide for professionals, and that has really easy explainers, so you could share that with your teams, for example, who may not be as proficient, they may not know how this content can be created. So that can be really helpful. And I guess I wanted to tell you that what to do if this happens to you or to someone you care for. If someone needs advice on extortion. So first of all, you have to stop communicating with the criminal. You don't pay. Paying in this scenario can actually be illegal sometimes. You have to contain the images, so you don't forward the images, you don't share them, but also don't remove them, kind of keep them in place. And then of course you report them. First of all, all cases of this should be reported to the police because sharing AI generated images of child sexual abuse is just as criminal as images of existing children. And then you can report to Report Remove for children. And if you are caring for, for example, a vulnerable adult, you can report images like that to stop non-consensual image abuse and the [revenge porn hotline](#). And just to summarise, I guess, to answer the question, what is the harm? I think if I had to describe it with one sentence, I'd say that it allows children to be exploited without even participating, and anyone with a public image can be exploited, not just children. So, I feel like our digital presences are being challenged in a way. They're becoming a safeguarding risk, just having images out there may not be safe anymore. Thank you.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thank you, Mariya. And again, such a powerful presentation and the way that you summarised that information for us was excellent. And I think just two or three of the things that I got from that was just that sense that a number of the children have already suffered sexual abuse, so we can't think about this distinction between what happens online and what happens offline, those things are so inextricably linked. I think you're helping us think about the impact of organised crime. And I think one of the most powerful things is that we often tell children and young people to be careful about what they share. But you're saying it doesn't even have to be, it can be very neutral content that's been shared and it's still

used. So just thanks again for sharing your expertise with us in that presentation. So, I'm going to ask a couple of questions to the panel. Again, just come in if there's things that you want to say, and then I'll probably go to questions that are coming from the floor, so to speak. But I just want to say I really appreciate it, I think Mariya put it really well. This is, it's so powerful, but it's so worrying as well and I think everybody will be sitting there with that sense of just how challenging this material is as well. So, again, I think what the webinar aims to do, and I think you've all done that really well, is just to help us understand the issue, but actually say, here are some of the solutions and here are some of the things that we can do. And again, Mariya and Valerie, I was really struck by a kind of whole family approach as well that you were thinking about. So again, just to open up the discussion with you, if you could share with us what do you think are the key messages around how we support parents and carers, what are the key things that they need to know. And when I'm thinking about carers, I think, Mariya, you were talking about it, obviously we are thinking about kinship carers, foster carers, residential workers, as well as families. So, what's the advice that you'd most want to give parents and carers, but also what should we be telling our children and young people? And I get that those are massive questions, but just what are the top things that you'd want us to know? John, I'm going to come back to you first.

**JC** **John Carr**

Well... I've never been a social worker. I've never worked directly with the families of abused children. So, I'm probably less well qualified to speak about that specifically. There's tonnes of excellent advice for parents and families available. And the difficulty very often is parents don't feel confident enough to engage with these issues. And there's also a question of scale and scalability. And also, I'll be blunt, I think putting the onus on parents is exactly what the industry wants us all to think. It's not. And by the way, this is very much linked to American jurisprudence and American legal structures about what they think parents' responsibilities are and what the state's responsibilities are vis-a-vis children's upbringing. And I've written about this separately. I was a lawyer in an earlier incarnation. And there is a reason why the United States of America is the only country in the world that has not signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). And that reason is, under Supreme Court decisions, and as I say, under American jurisprudence, they give a preferential role to the rights of parents vis-a-

vis children as compared with children themselves. So, you see decisions in the American courts that are inconceivable in the United Kingdom or indeed in any European country where we put the rights of the child and the developing interests of the child first, not the rights of parents vis-a-vis their children. But that explains why the American companies are always banging on about parents need to be more engaged, parents need to take greater responsibility. And just think how convenient that is for them, because that's shifting the burden, the responsibility, at least in part, from them to somebody else. So, I absolutely get why it's important to reach out to parents and help parents understand, help social workers and police officers and so on. But I'm afraid at the end of the day, the focus of my attention has been, at any rate, on regulatory change, strengthening enforcement mechanisms to get the companies to take a greater responsibility. And there have been some very important cases in the United States in the past three or four weeks which I can come back to later on if anybody's interested.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Brilliant. John, we'll come back to you on that after I've heard from Mariya and Valeriie, because I think that's just struck me in such a powerful way, what you're saying there as well about the convenience of the focus on parents and carers, and we do want them to be skilled up, but I totally hear the point you're making. So I'll come back to you quickly after this on the bit that you're talking about, but I'll come to Valeriie and Mariya next just on that point around parents and carers or children and young people.

**VS** **Valeriia Soloveva**

Well, at least to start talking about the parents here in the offence, we always say that sexual violence against the child is violence against the whole family. And sometimes this is not emphasised enough. And in many health care systems around the world, parents are in a way left out as the child that may at some point receive it with some form of support. However, parents are left to deal with it entirely on their own, especially if they don't have any community or family support. And that's why we started supporting parents as well. We found that when evaluating our groups, that was a great finding that by supporting parents, you facilitate the recovery of the whole family because the parents then also get resources and energy to start taking care of themselves and of the child. Another finding that we had is that the parents' and child's trauma

symptoms often align. For example, we noticed that those symptoms that were reported by parents, symptoms that the child was having, were the same symptoms that parents were reporting themselves, and those were predominantly quite harsh as well, such as anxiety, sleep problems, these overwhelming emotional reactions. And we were talking also about the scaling. Well, the peer support groups that we organised, we decided to do them online. And the reason for this was that we wanted to reach as many families as possible because online it is possible to join from a safe space if you do not have this at home. It is also very low threshold and free. And we found that very effective and that's how we also scaled it to other countries because it does not require a lot of resources to facilitate those, but then the outcome is quite great that so many families get supported. And again, parents often say that is most helpful to hear or to talk to parents who have found themselves in a similar situation because they are truly understand what you're going through.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Yeah, I can understand that. Yeah, thanks, Valeriia. Mariya, is there anything else you'd like to add to that?

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

Absolutely, I agree wholeheartedly with both of you. Just wanted to say that sometimes I talk to educators and people who are in safeguarding and what we hear quite often is that there is a huge lag quite often between children's skills and parents' skills and teachers' skills. Sometimes, you know. children are just early adopters of technology and parents and teachers find it really hard to keep up, but unfortunately, I think in the current circumstances, they have to. They have to skill up. And you can't have something on your child's device that you personally don't understand.

**VS** **Valeriia Soloveva**

Could I follow up on this because I absolutely, I agree with what Mariya has been saying and also we, when we talk to parents, we try to highlight that they do not necessarily need hard technical skills. What is more important is that they spend time with their child online and engage and also is very good to start from very positive interactions. So not only who are you texting with so that it's so scary and direct and breaking the privacy, but also it's good to spend this positive time, perhaps ask what games the child is doing online, how are they spending time, because

that's their social life nowadays. It's a space where the parent needs to be present, and the more present parent is in a positive way, the more likely the child is also to come out to the parent and say if something's scary or difficult to process is happening or if someone showing them something online or texting them as well. And another point about how to reach out to the young people, something we have been doing actually in Finland and in the US. We notice and, perhaps it's the same in the UK, that children, they often disclose sexual violence to their friends. They do not go to safe adults. It's very difficult to kind of escalate it to that point. They often go to their friends. And we have found it also helpful to, we have done this website where children get instructions on how to support their friend who have come to them and shared that something like this has happened, that someone has re-shared their nude image or someone is threatening them online. And then we have uploaded this ready-made conversation templates and perhaps text templates on how the friend can encourage each other to go to a safe adult and where to go in this situation because then, unfortunately, these situations are very often handled without a doubt, so perhaps it is better to also empower friends to support each other so that they have at least some kind of a resource to go to. And this website that we have, it's called [My Friend Too](#), and it's also available in English because we were piloting it in Finland and in the US.

**JC John Carr**

I don't know how many people on the call watched the Channel 4 news last night. There was a discussion on Channel 4 News about the government's plans to introduce or not introduce a ban or a delay on children under the age of 16 from using social media. And on the one hand, we had [Baroness Beeban Kidron](#), speaking up on behalf of children. And against there was Big Brother Watch, a privacy organisation. And one of the key arguments, in fact, at the end of the day, the only real argument that Big Brother Watch made against the idea of a potential ban or delay for under 16s, was that parents had to accept greater responsibility for their children's behaviour. And this has been the argument, by the way, since 1995, which is when I first became engaged with these whole issues. There is a kind of history of thinking around new technology and around the internet in particular, which essentially says, it's not the tech company's fault. The technology is neutral. How it's used is a matter of responsibility for the end users, and in particular, for parents of children. And last night, I've forgotten the name, the woman

who runs the chief executive of Big Brother Watch ([Silkie Carlo](#)). She specifically said that there are one in four, she said, I've never seen a source for this number, one in four children under the age of five have got smartphones and have got social media accounts. Well, I cannot believe that's true, but even if it were true, and she went on to say it expressly, parents have to take greater responsibility. Well, we've known that since the year dot. The issue is not what parents should do, and we all know the difficulties parents in modern families face. The issue that we need to focus is what is it that companies can do that they're not doing that helps parents keep their children safe? And the answer is, and it's enshrined in UK law now, safety by design, not safety as an afterthought. And that's what we've had up to now. We are retrofitting safety tools now that should have been there from the very beginning but weren't because there was no legal compulsion on the companies to do it. Now there is legal compulsion, and we have to look to our regulators to make sure that that compulsion means something.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

OK, brilliant, John. Thanks very much. I saw that as well. It was Silkie Carlo, I think her name is, that was the person from Big Brother Watch. Yeah, yeah, because I watched that with interest last night as well. So John, I'm actually going to come back to that point, but I just want to say, Valeriie, that was another really important point you made about where young people often talk about their experiences if they had the access to other young people. So how are we thinking about how we empower, how do we support other young people for that? So, I think, again, just want to recognise that was another bit of information, another lens I hadn't quite thought about. So, thanks for that. John, I'm going to come back to you and then back to Valeriie and Mariya again. So, I really hear you. I think that's again a powerful point you've made about let's, you know, this is not about primarily parents and carers, this is about the companies. So again, can you tell us what is it you'd like to see in terms of the tech companies or regulators? You talk about safety by design. Can you tell us a bit more about what you mean by that?

**JC** **John Carr**

So this is the idea that you are obliged to anticipate what could go wrong with your products and take steps before you launch the product to ensure that those things that could go wrong, don't go wrong. And that is absolutely not what has been happening historically with the internet.

Remember the founding principle of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg's famous slogan was, 'Move fast and break things'. So, companies were very keen to get first mover advantage in the market, to get a new product out there, build up a new customer base, try to make sure that they're ahead of everybody else, and if there's stuff wrong with it, we can deal with that later. That's got to go. That idea has to go. Professor Ross Anderson, who sadly recently died, professor of internet security and engineering at Cambridge University, the way he put it was, 'Put it out Monday, fix it Tuesday, maybe', right? And that historically has been the attitude of the companies because of the legal protections they got, they've been under no legal compulsion to take those extra steps and measures which cost them money and don't make them money. Now, I mentioned that recently there have been two very, very important cases in the American courts, one in California, one in the state of New Mexico. In the state of New Mexico, using consumer protection legislation, Meta specifically, were fined \$350 million. right for I think it was something like 7000 individual breaches of consumer protection law. I've written a posting on this on Facebook today, by the way, and in LinkedIn, if you want to, if you want to check it out. And basically, what the court held was, and it's the first case of its kind, by the way, so it's a big moment, somebody calling it the big tobacco moment for high tech. What the court found in the New Mexico case was that product safety had not been given sufficient attention by the company, by Facebook, before they put out their products, and that that evaded the Section 230 issue of zero liability for content. What they were saying was the design of the product, the algorithmic addiction aspects of what the product did were the things that posed the risks to children. So that's one thing. The case in California, was similar in nature, but there they found against Meta and Google and YouTube that they hadn't taken sufficient steps under the consumer protection legislation, not whether you were a publisher or not, but under the consumer protection legislation. So that in essence is what the Safety by Design concept is about. What it's saying to tech companies is, yes, innovate, yes, develop new products, yes, put them out and see if there's an appetite for them amongst the public, but don't do it until you have satisfied yourself to a reasonable degree that you're not putting out something that's going to harm children.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thanks, John. Really good, really clear response there. Thank you. So going to come to you, Valerie and then Mariya as well. So anything else

around the, particularly around the tech companies and but also anything else? There are some questions around how else we can strengthen the legislation and say is it good enough? So, anything you'd want to say around that as well, that's come to you first, Valeriie.

**VS** **Valeriia Soloveva**

Yeah, I have just actually shared in the chat some actionable recommendations that we have been pushing to tech companies on our side but just wanted to add two points in here. First of all, it's very important to continue removing this abusive imagery from the internet, because in our survey of offenders, we found that more than half of them have encountered child sexual abuse material before they were 18. 13% had seen it before they were 10. And we do believe that exposure to such violent material can constitute adverse childhood experience. So, it may have this very long-term negative consequences on the development of the child and contribute to further harmful behaviour. So by removing child sexual abuse material, we decrease the risk of exposure to this material and also perhaps contribute to less offenders being present in there and offending and reducing harmful sexual behaviour in general and another area of work that we're focusing on protecting children right now is exploring deterrence messages as they can be quite effective in stopping offenders because again, when talking about protecting children, it's good to remember that the key issue are offenders in here and we need to stop and prevent them from reaching out to children. We do find that deterrence messages, if phrased correctly, they can stop an offending behaviour at the moment of risk, even for example, our survey. And we will actually, I cannot speak about this much right now, but in two weeks we will be presenting some results about research and the effectiveness of deterrence messages online at the IP Researchers Europe conference (IPRE) in the UK. But again, this is not published yet, but it will come out, so stay tuned. So, these are essentially the things that I wanted to focus on. And of course, it's important to offer this low threshold resources for people who believe they might have offended against the child or have already offended so that if they are undetected, they can get some guidance on how to stop their behaviour. We have this redirection self-help programme for offenders who view child sexual abuse material that helps people to take control of their behaviour. It's been evaluated and it's also very effective and it is available in English. This is anonymous resource that anyone can access. It's available by a simple search on the web and I can also share the link. And again, it's

always good to remember that the core of the issue is offenders and they need to be stopped. And of course, children need to be protected as well. But it's not because of them, this is happening.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Yeah, thanks, Valeriia. Mariya, anything else you'd like to add there?

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

No, I guess just to echo, but yes, safety by design has to be non-negotiable. Child safety cannot be an afterthought. I guess the only other thing I'd say that we welcome the UK's action to introduce AI testing for designated authorities like the IWF and that we will be given powers to test models to see if they can create child sexual abuse materials. So that's, of course, going to be beneficial. But we don't know much about the particulars at the moment. So we'll see how that plays out.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Great, thanks very much. And again, going back to John, I'm going to come back to you again and coming back to one of our questions from people who are here today, as I think you alluded to what might be, you know, the AI has beneficial qualities and one of the questions that has been asked is, can we actually use AI to find and report online sexual abuses? Is there a possibility of that or anything that you want to research that. So, I'll come back to you, John, on that.

**JC** **John Carr**

Well, the short answer is don't do it. Any attempt to find child sexual abuse material by a private individual means that they are committing a crime. It's a crime to attempt to find it as well as it is to download and possess it. So, the short answer is don't do it. I'm on the executive board of the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#) and both they and I think the IWF as well do have tools which allow them to proactively search for child sexual abuse material. I don't know about the situation in Finland, but anyway obviously the police can do it, but there are a small number of NGOs of which the Canadian Centre and the IWF and I think NCMEC ([National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#)) in the United States have got a legal power or at least permission from the authorities to proactively search for it. But if anybody else does it I'm afraid they're running the risk of committing a crime. But the short answer is AI tools can be hugely useful and beneficial. They can definitely do good work.

We're not concerned here so much with the good that they can do, but how do we limit and prevent the bad that we already know they aren't doing?

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thanks, John. Mariya, I'm actually going to come to you next because I would imagine you've got quite a strong view around some of this, so I'll come to you next.

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

Yeah, so we currently don't use AI to search for content like this. Everything is done by human eyes. Content is only assessed by humans. And we have looked into this. So far, none of the tools actually provide 100% accuracy, so it's a bit... Yes, tools are available, but it has to be taken with a pinch of salt at the moment. What's going to happen in the future?

**JC** **John Carr**

Yeah, actually, can I just jump in on that and say, you're absolutely right about the lack of accuracy, and it's one of the reasons why the Canadian Centre has got a backlog of, I think it's 15 or 16 million images that need to be individually analysed by humans because once they're analysed and it's confirmed that they are in fact illegal images, they go into a database of hashes, which can then be used to find copies of them. And the reason why it's important that humans look at them and take a decision is obvious. If the database that's being used by children's organisations is found to have inaccuracies in its database, the privacy lobby and the free speech people will attack us for being careless about individuals' rights and so on. But it has generated a whole range of additional problems to do with our capacity to deal with the volumes.

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

Just one thing I wanted to add, you know, it feels like the genie is out of the bottle, right? The content is created at scale, so it only feels right that the tool that can fight this will be also AI generated, or some kind of artificial intelligence, just because of the sheer scale. We'll see; I guess. There's a lot of chatter about this, but early days.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thank you. Valerie, is there anything, before we move on to the next

question, is there anything you wanted to come in specifically around that?

**VS Valeriia Soloveva**

No, just responding to John, In Finland we actually do work in [Project Arica](#). We have analysts in our team who analyse child sexual abuse material and they have also been seeing more and more AI generated imagery coming in and it actually does slow down the work of analysts at the moment quite a lot because now more and more they actually have to focus and look in, which is also not good for general wellbeing to stay focused on this image instead of quickly analysing it.

**CB Claire Burns**

Thank you. I've had a question here as well about it, so we've also had a huge increase in abuse images of workers being generated through AI, so that could be like residential workers or social workers, I think is what people are saying, and those involved in child protection practice. The British Association of Social Work produced a brief guide for social worker, but what does the panel suggest are any protections or key messages for staff and workers in this kind of setting? So, I don't know who wants to, anybody want to kick off around that?

**MK Mariya Kraft**

I think it will be the same as protecting images of children and kind of educational settings. The same should go for staff images to, you know, only use them when necessary. And you just have to think of who you're sharing this and every time have to think, you know, does this have to be public? Can we limit access to only people who absolutely need this?

**CB Claire Burns**

Thanks, Mariya. John or Valeriia anything additional there? So, yeah, so I think we've got about 7 or 8 minutes. But again, an interesting question that's come in. It's quite a general question, but I think an important one; should we really be thinking twice about the way in which we share photographs, pictures of our children, of our family members, of what else do we need to think about is that we're doing that in quite a way where we don't think about what the implications are or we're sharing them on Facebook.

**JC** **John Carr**

I think I think a lot of a lot of schools... My granddaughter goes to a local girls school and they never publish anything, any images of the children on the school's website. Within our family, we exchange images, but only and entirely within private encrypted WhatsApp groups and things of that kind. So, I mean, these people will find images and distort them and abuse them. The question really is how easy you make it for them to do that with your own children. So, the simple advice is never put anything on the open internet or the dark web. And if you want to exchange stuff, we all exchange stuff, do it in private groups, do it using encryption. It's one of the good uses of encryption.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thanks very much.

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

I just wanted to add that if you are sharing images on social networks, there are usually controls that can be implemented by you as the account holder. You know, just don't allow public access to anyone, limit it to your friends, and that should be enough. We all share images as a part of our life now, you know, using the internet can bring so much joy, especially for people who don't live together, for example, my parents, grandparents live elsewhere. So, it's lovely to be able to share that with them. And they absolutely shouldn't stop. Don't let us scare you into stopping your life online, you know, but just be mindful of who you're sharing with.

**VS** **Valeriia Soloveva**

I have similar points, but perhaps also it's good to have these conversations with children again to make them think not only what images they share in private between each other, because that's often where the conversation focuses, but also what they're posting online and what are the consequences of that. And again, it's great if all discussions about the internet start from something positive so that the child gets more comfortable with time discussing things that happen online, because again, if approached with this very heavy topics and restrictions right away, also at a very late age, it might be actually too late to build this connection.

**JC****John Carr**

One of the most difficult conversations parents should have with their children is, and it's tricky, is about not trusting everybody, even close friends. So, you send, you know, you're 14 years old, you think you're in love, this is the big one. This is the rest of your life already mapped out. He asks you for a picture. Of course, you're in love, so you're going to send him the picture. And at that moment, you might both genuinely be in love, but you can never know when you send him that picture where that picture is going to end up, even by accident. Never mind what happens if, God forbid, the relationship should end next week or whenever it might be. I can't remember how many love affairs I had between the age of 14 and 15, but, you know, adolescents are going through turbulent times, and they believe this friendship or this relationship is forever. They believe they can trust them and probably they can at one level, but they can't trust the device. They can't trust the internet. They can't know where that image is going to end up eventually. So, they just need to be told that in a very plain way, you know, because if you don't, they will make mistakes that could cost them very dearly.

**CB****Claire Burns**

Yeah, thanks, John. It's really helpful. And again, when you're talking about parents and carers, I'm just thinking about the work that we do at CELCIS. So, I'm thinking about how you equip residential workers, foster carers, kinship carers who are often, as Mariya, you were saying, a generation, you know, maybe a bit older as well, maybe grandparents as well. We're just about out of time, so this is the last question I'm going to put to you. And just before I do, I just want to say the number of comments we've had about how useful this has been and how useful your inputs have been. You know, people are saying, you know, really wanted me to share it. Thanks for your, for sharing your expertise and how powerful and informative it's been. So I'm just going to ask you if there's anything else that you feel you haven't had a chance to see or any kind of what you would want the takeaway to be from your from your presentations, which is probably the like that trickiest question to ask, but I'm always just aware there might be something else that you haven't shared. So, John, I'm going to start with you. Is there anything else that you would have wanted to say to this audience or kind of what you would want us to go away with, a main takeaway?

**JC** **John Carr**

Don't be depressed. It's very easy to get depressed when you think about this and the speed of change. But, you know, as I said, I got involved in this world in 1995. I was a founding director of the Internet Watch Foundation in 1996. It did look very bleak at different point in time, but we have learned a lot of lessons. Politicians and governments and regulators are more open to it. Public pressure is becoming more powerful and important. So don't despair, but do get engaged through your women's organisations, through your social clubs and so on. We need to broaden this discussion away from just social work and children's groups. This is a societal challenge. And if I had one ambition, it's to find a way to get these bigger social formations to take this up with their MPs and with government ministers, because they are much more open to it than they were thirty-odd years ago.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Yeah, thanks, John. It does feel, I think that's right. I think it does feel like we're on the cusp of a bit of a step change. Valeriie, I'm going to come to you for your last comment and then to Mariya.

**VS** **Valeriia Soloveva**

I wanted to share that this issue does indeed require this holistic approach from every possible angle. And again, there is a lot that we can do. It's good to remember to focus on offenders because they are the core of the problem. But of course, we can continue still not putting responsibility on parents, but at least empowering them with some easy to consume information on how to stay safe online and how they can support children and continue very strong advocacy work to push tech companies and politicians to introduce very robust regulations online because we do believe that a lot of these problems can tackle if just appropriate safeguards are in place.

**CB** **Claire Burns**

Thank you, Valeriia. Mariya, final words with you.

**MK** **Mariya Kraft**

Oh, great contributions. I just say stay open-minded and stay curious, you know, and that will hopefully help all of us.



**Claire Burns**

Great, thanks so much. So, thanks to everybody that turned up today. I think this is one of the webinars where we've had the highest number of participants. And I wish you could see and you may get a chance to see the amount of times that 'excellent' is said in the chat function as people are leaving. So, a real testament to all of your contribution, your expertise. So, a huge thanks to our three speakers. Thank you.

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