



Stop It Now!

SCOTLAND | ALBA

Helping prevent
child sexual abuse



Working to Protect Children

Technology Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour and Children and Young People

Stuart Allardyce

**Director – LFF / Stop It Now!
Scotland**

stuartallardyce@stopitnow.org

How we keep children safe – Stop It Now

Scotland



1. Providing free and confidential advice through our helpline, enabling callers to take positive, preventative actions to protect children



2. Helping people achieve positive change and offence-free living



3. Creating safer environments within families, in communities and online



4. Equipping professionals with knowledge and tools to better protect children



5. Influencing social and political attitudes about how children can best be protected

Growing up online

- internet users are under the age of 18, most children use a smartphones 'daily' or 'almost all the time'
- The internet and mobile phones play such a substantial part in young people's general day-to-day lives, then also flirting, exploration of sexuality and the establishment and maintenance of intimate relationships can be mediated via technology. Anonymity online can open up worlds young people would be too embarrassed to explore otherwise and create opportunities for sexual risk taking.
- Visual nature of online culture, social media approval, increasing use of encryption and auto-deletion in communication apps, the disinhibitory and immediate nature of online interactions and accessibility and influence of online pornography influence adolescent relational and sexual development online.



Everyone's Invited

"It was common knowledge that boys in our friendship group during sixth form had "locked" albums on their phones, that contained the nudes of various girls in the year group or wider school that is they would share among themselves. Certain boys even bragged about sharing their current girlfriend's pictures with their friends."

"Every day I was harassed at the school either being groped, cat-called or sent violent sexual messages including about beating women up

I used to love quick add, it used to be a place to meet people. But now a lot of the time a boy will add you and straight away as if you send nudes. When i proceed to say no they either air me, or pressure me even more."

The boys from the nearby boys school shared a coach service with my girls school. From year 8 (age 13) we were made to watch porn on phones by the boys, pestered for photos or to meet up, had hands put up skirts or under shirts and jumpers, bags emptied and sanitary pads stuck to younger kids, it was endless.

Case example

Derek is 15 and sends a nude photograph of himself to his 15 year old girlfriend. His girlfriend's parents see the image on her phone and contact the police. He is charged, although his girlfriend thought the images were just fun and flirty.

Jack is 16 and meets an older man online in a gay chatroom. The man sends him sexual images of children and says that Jack is now in possession of child pornography. He asks Jack to send him pictures of himself or the man will report him to the police.

Alan is 14 and spends a lot of time online watching pornography. He finds it difficult to speak to girls so he starts sending messages asking girls in his class via Facebook messenger to do sexual things online. When he gets blocked by them, and gets angry. After a couple of hours of watching pornography he sends a message to his female cousin who is 11 asking whether she would have sex with him. (, Under the Radar, 2017)

What's really going on here?

- EU Kids Online 2020 survey found that 16% of 12-14 year olds and 32% of 15-16 year olds had received sexual messages. 4% of 12-14 year olds had sent them and 10% of 15-16 year olds. 11% and 25% had received unwanted sexual requests (and some data suggests this is increasing). Requests from peers, often known to the young person are common ()
- In 2019 a survey of 1,173 children and young people found that 44% of young people could recall no school input about posting sexual messages or images or online sexual behaviour
- age 14 is most common age for a child groomed online. Average age of online groomer is 18 according to
- Around

What is TA-HSB?



Technology Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour is described as

“One or more children engaging in **sexual discussions or acts** – using the internet and/or any image-creating/sharing or communication device – which is considered **inappropriate** and/or **harmful** given their **age** and **stage of development**. This behaviour falls on a **continuum** of severity, from use of pornography to online child sexual abuse”. ()

The continuum of sexual behaviour (Hackett, 2010)

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmentally expected• Socially acceptable• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal• Shared decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate• Generally consensual and reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problematic and concerning behaviours• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected• No overt elements of victimisation• Consent issues may be unclear• May lack reciprocity or equal power• May include levels of compulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victimising intent or outcome• Includes misuse of power• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance• Intrusive• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim• May include elements of expressive violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically violent sexual abuse• Highly intrusive• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator• Sadism

I-AIM TA-HSB Continuum



TA-HSB is harmful for child/ young person and may directly or indirectly harm another			The TA-HSB is likely to directly harm another person			
Developmentally inappropriate use of adult pornography (DIP) Harmful to Self	Showing another young person developmentally inappropriate pornography	Sexting i.e. sharing sexual selfies	Possessing, making and distributing indecent images of children (IIOC)	Technology Assisted sexual grooming	Sexual Harassment and sexual solicitation	Sexual abuse of children online
Other forms of TA-HSB	May include writing of sexually explicit stories which have been shared using technology. Phoning adult sex lines.					

Impact: Everyone's Invited

"I feel bad about being upset about this, because I haven't been raped but various things have happened to me throughout my life which have lead to me feeling like I am only worth my body. Sadly, sexual abuse, nude coercion and harassment is so normalised that it's caused me to gaslight myself and suppress many traumas for years, and only realising how messed up things were when I took a step back a few years later. I have a phobia of men now. I am scared of every single man I come across. Things that happened when I was just as young as the age of 8 or 9 were disregarded by my own parents, justified by the exact dreaded statement 'he's just being a boy.' In regards to other situations later on in my life, I've been gaslighted and told by boys 'you wanted it' and 'stop overreacting.' This NEEDS to stop. I don't want other girls to feel how I have been made to feel at such a young age and to endure trauma that will impact their whole life. Please remember to NEVER invalidate yourself. Whatever you've gone through, even if it's not to the extent of rape, you're valid, and you are SO MUCH MORE than your body even if you've been led to believe otherwise."

- Research evidence is limited, scattered across different academic literatures, and challenged by speed of studies going out of date quickly (Lewis, 2018)
- TA-HSB may also reflect and amplify problematic or harmful sexual behaviours in the child's offline peer culture or in wider society such as sexist attitudes or sexual harassment (Setty, 2019)
- Research does suggest that, for young males convicted of possessing IIOC, they were less likely to have had childhoods characterised by disruption or adversity and recidivism is low (Aebi, Plattner, Ernest, Kaszynski, & Bessler, 2014; Stevens, Hutchin, French, & Craissati, 2013).
- Early evidence suggests that a great deal of online HSB has more affinities with harassment and bullying than with contact HSB (Allardyce and Yates, 2018)
- Some evidence to suggest that professionals may over-react in some situations – some agreement about definitions and proportionate approaches to good practice essential (Hollis and Belton, 2017)

ROSA – Reducing Online Sexual Abuse

- 3 year action research project funded by RS MacDonald Trust
- Worked with 60 young people in Glasgow who had been involved with TA-HSB
- 6-10 week 1-1 psycho-educational programme offered (Inform YP)
- Young people steering group at Shawlands Academy allowed learning from the project to lead to co-created resources for responding to and preventing HSB
- Parent workshops, revised PSE materials and anonymiser reporting system rolled out at Shawlands Academy.
- Independent evaluation of project to be published November 2021

ROSA – Key Messages

Sharing sexual images is increasingly seen as a normative part of adolescent sexual development

Online pornography is seen a source of learning about sex in adolescence.

Online problematic behaviour can be related to vulnerability (but not always). Young people with ASN over-represented amongst both those who are victimised and those who cause harm.

Adults are struggling to identify concrete things they can do that would promote safety.

Young people don't know where to get help online or offline.

Separating young people into 'perpetrators' and 'victims' is problematic

Young people often lack understanding of the law in relation to online sexual images

Young people often lack an understanding of consent online

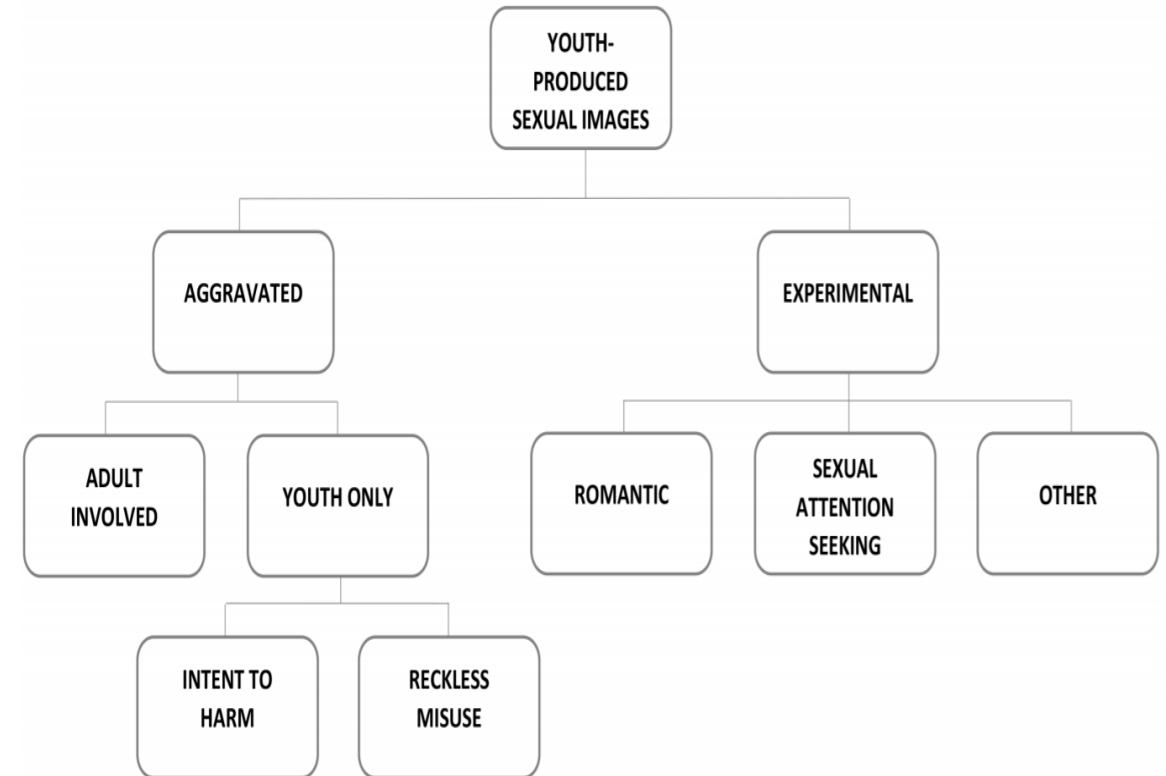
Significant issue around non-consensual sharing of images after breakups

Psycho-educational work can be effective

Specific issues: Sexting

Described by young people as ‘nudes’ or ‘pics’ some argue that the use of technology within adolescent relationships (such as the consensual sharing of nude images) need not be harmful, and indeed can be developmentally appropriate with children having a right to send such images (Setty, 2019). Shift in literature from focus on illegality of images to context of production and sharing of images.

Coercion and power difference can tilt the power difference, and non-consensual sharing is a key issue.



Specific Issues: Dating and TA-HSB

- Within intimate or dating relationships the prevalence of TA-HSB varies notably, ranging from low estimate of 13% (Stonard, 2018) to 73% of British adolescents who reported some form of TA-HSB within their relationships within the past 12 months (Stonard, 2018).
- Technology can also be used within intimate or dating relationships to initiate, maintain, or escalate abuse (Stonard, 2020). Typical technology assisted behaviours reported by adolescents within their relationships include: the sending of insults, threats, humiliation, non-consensual sharing of images, sexual pressure, monitoring messages or whereabouts, demanding passwords to social media accounts, deleting contacts or preventing an individual using technology (Stonard, 2018).
- Behaviours typically fall into three categories: digital monitoring and control; digital direct aggression and digital sexual abuse (Reed et al., 2021)

Specific issues: Pornography

- 94 per cent of children in a 2016 UK study had been exposed to pornography by the age of 14 years. (Martellozo et al, 2016)
- Pornography in the mainstream has changed dramatically Scenes of sexual violence are commonplace, many contain graphic scenes involving violence and material typically considered 'deviant' (e.g. pseudo incest videos)
- It perpetuates negative stereotypes of race, body image, gender roles and mainstream porn designed specifically for a male market can be viewed as misogynistic
- Some children and young people intentionally seek out sexual content. Some may seek them due to curiosity, others may try to find answers for questions they have about puberty, their own body and sexual identity. Thus, as with other perceived risks, seeing sexual images might also represent an opportunity and help for some.
- exposure to pornography from a young age is a common feature of referrals to harmful sexual behaviour services (Lewis, 2018) suggesting that it results in disinhibition to sexual violence and aggressions and skewed attitudes towards sex and relationships or can become addictive (Hornor, 2020; Lewis, 2018). Linkage between pornography and sexual violence is little understood (Allardyce and Yates, 2018)

Assessment and Intervention

- Lewis (2018) describes the key components of a technology specific intervention plan as potentially: education about online safety; awareness of the online consequences of behaviours; dispelling the myth of anonymity; emotional regulation; identifying triggers; understanding consent; social skills; victim empathy; self compassion and relapse prevention. CBT approaches have been found to reduce self-rated problematic behaviours (Silovsky et al., 2019), but the active involvement of parents and carers is often a key element in these interventions (Lewis, 2018; Silovsky et al., 2019).
- Danger of over-treatment
- Adult online offending literature might suggest that mainstream HSB assessment tools may be useful with those who have got into trouble with online behaviour

Safe spaces online



Stop It Now!

SCOTLAND | ALBA

Helping prevent
child sexual abuse

internet
matters.org



Parents Protect!

Together we can prevent child sexual abuse

Prevention

- Messaging should not over-emphasise ‘stranger danger’ and needs to show that potential offenders include people known to the child or young person. Online sexual exploitation primarily involves teenagers who are groomed online and exploited by people both online and off-line; playing on their interests in romance, relationships, and their sexual curiosity. Warnings about not giving out personal information to strangers are unlikely to be effective and more effective prevention should involve teaching youth about healthy and unhealthy relationships and offering comprehensive sex education.
- Most prevention education programmes on internet safety are best carried out through programmes that focus on both offline and online risks. Messaging around online sexual exploitation should help children and young people understand the risks of having a relationship with someone who is considerably older, including the fact that the older person may be committing a crime. Education can help them to distinguish when someone really cares about them from when someone is being sexually exploitative. Successful programmes have multisection and multi-element sections that give children and young people opportunities to share their views around the content, explore values, and discuss relationships. As well as what trust and consent means in a relationship, and practice skills including how to respond to solicitations.

Prevention (continued)

- In relation to sending 'nudes', prevention strategies based on warnings and scare tactics are unlikely to be effective. 'Anti-sexting' messaging would better be replaced with 'anti-harm' messaging. Reinforcing the idea that sending 'nudes' is stupid or shameful justifies later victim blaming and bullying. The problem intersects with teen sexual risk taking in general, relationship violence, bullying, and offline sexual exploitation.
- This can best be done by integrating the issue of online behaviour and 'nudes' into wider discussions on these themes. Discussions about teen sexual risk taking should take place in a context of children's rights, underlining children and young people's rights to make choices, models of consent and also emphasising the responsibilities of adults to help protect young people from harm.
- Establish a position between the extremes of sex positivity and sex negativity. Children and young people have diverse positions and perspectives on topics such as pornography or 'nudes'. Children and young people need to be encouraged to think critically about what they are doing and why, and the importance of ethical treatment for themselves and others.
- Pay attention to the wording of the prevention messaging about gender, sexuality rights and responsibilities.
- Peer education and bystander interventions have a role to play.

ROSA – Next Steps

- Online conference to share ROSA findings November 2021
- Inform YP programme to be offered online to young people across Scotland July 2021 onwards
- Training in Inform YP programme (3 x 4 hr online sessions) to be made available late 2021
- Education Scotland training package for schools on Identifying and Responding to TA-HSB to be rolled out 2021-22 academic year. Includes leaflet.
- Work on a Lucy Faithfull Foundation Young People's website (2022)
- Scaling up of school prevention work

Resources

- RHSP contains over 100 lesson plans for use in all education settings. Several of the lesson plans integrate key messaging about sexual abuse and its prevention.

- A resource for professionals which aims to help them support children and young people in their understanding of healthy relationships and consent.

- Stop It Now! Scotland's Upstream website has a page on child sexual abuse prevention resources for schools in Scotland.

- a partnership of three leading organisations: Childnet International, Internet Watch Foundation and SWGfL, with one mission - to promote the safe and responsible use of technology for young people.

- CEOP is a law enforcement agency and is here established e to help keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online.

- Thinkuknow is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline.



What's the problem?

A guide for parents of children and young people who have got in trouble online



Scottish Government
Riaghaidh na h-Alba
gov.scot



Stop It Now!

Helping prevent
child sexual abuse

Preventing child sexual abuse

Cyber resilience and internet safety

A Guide for parents and carers



Harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit

This toolkit is designed for parents, carers, family members and professionals, to help everyone play their part in keeping children safe.

It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families.

Get started



Contact us

Stop It Now!

Helping prevent
child sexual abuse

Call our confidential helpline 0808 1000 900

For more information visit stopitnow.org.uk



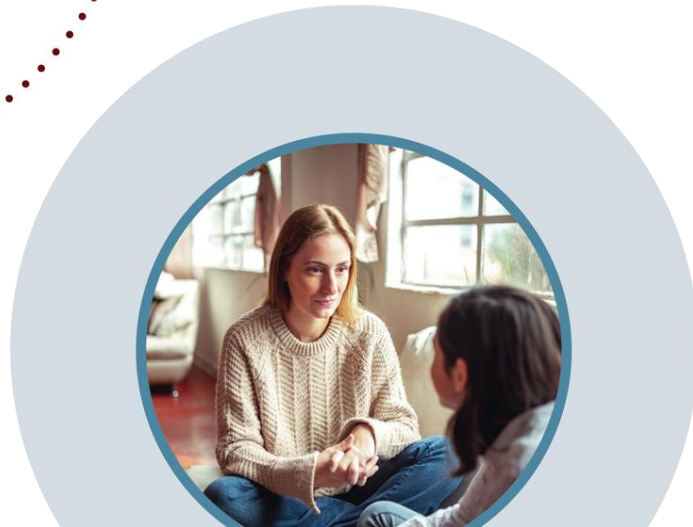
Stop It Now!

SCOTLAND | ALBA

**Helping prevent
child sexual abuse**



Working to Protect Children



Thank you!

Prevention Targets

	Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention
Offenders (Potential)			
Victims (Children)			
Families/ Communities			
Situations			