Online Abuse: A Victim’s Perspective

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Aims of the Presentation

• What is meant by indecent images of children
• Case study
• The impact of images from a victim’s perspective
• CEOP & Birmingham University Research
• Findings to date
The UK national centre for protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Launched in April 2006 as a law enforcement child protection agency

Serious and organised crime

Multi-agency/professional Approach

Online and offline

Identify, locate and protect children

Bring offenders to account

Educate and inform
The images depict the rape/abuse and humiliation of children
• Worst type of abuse imaginable on one of the most vulnerable groups
• Every abusive image is a crime scene
• Unidentified children remain at risk
What happened...

• The victim had been sexually abused since she was 9 years old, by her uncle. She attempted suicide on a number of occasions.
• Evidence of Bribery seen through images/videos
• Child’s behaviour appeared disassociated from the abuse
• Towards the end of being identified the child was directing the camera and very highly sexualised.

Offender was given an indeterminate sentence, but must serve a minimum of 12 years.
On Safeguarding the Victim

- Police and Social Workers attend home address together
- Home set up with cameras and video cameras
- Living in a studio flat (described as living like a couple)
- One of the first questions asked by the child was: “how did you find me”?
- One disclosure made
- Refused medical examinations
Behavoural Difficulties

• Victim highly sexualised (Openly masturbating)
• Unhealthy attachment to male carers
• Risk to younger children (bullying behaviour)
• 5 Placement breakdowns
• Absconding back to Mother
• Absconding to known sex offenders house
Feelings After Identification

- Confused around feelings of being identified and relationship with abuser
- Refused to talk about abuse, Self harming
- Lack of therapeutic intervention (requires specialist?)
Long Term Considerations

• Therapeutic Needs (Not just about abuse but impact of images)

• Start of a new life for the victim

• Ongoing support required for non abusing parent and siblings

• Consider other factors of vulnerability (Mental health issues, breakdown of relationships with family members)

• Its important to continue working jointly with professionals
Impact of Images

• Consequences: Children may harm themselves for the fear of the abuse being known.

• Experience feelings of powerlessness

• Continued re-victimisation

• May be aware that professionals have viewed the images.

• Feelings of shame and blame themselves. (Told to smile, Groom Others)

• Suffer knowing that there is a permanent record of their abuse
Impact of Images (2)

- Children are not always disclosing
- Children do not always welcome therapeutic support
- Frightened about how offender/parents will react
- Detrimental perception about relationships with groomers
- Sexual Exploitation can have a serious impact: difficulties in forming relationships, lack of self esteem.
- Child is no longer at risk from their abuser but risks are still there through other factors
Aims of the Research

“An exploration of the vulnerabilities of child victims of online grooming and implications for professionals”

1. How do victims perceive what happened to them and what is their interpretation of events and behaviours leading up to the abuse?

2. To what extent do personality traits relate to the grooming experience?

3. To what extent is life satisfaction related to the grooming experience?

4. Which coping strategies are utilised by victims and how do these interact with the personality and life satisfaction of the victim?

5. How do victims differ from offenders in their perception of grooming?

6. What can professionals learn about online grooming, regarding prevention techniques and effective intervention?

7. How do personality traits and life satisfaction of a wider sample of young people, relate to their behaviour online?
Project Overview

Phase 1
- Adolescent victim interviews & psychometrics
- Qualitative
- N = 10-15

Phase 2
- Adult offender interviews
- Qualitative
- Sample based on victim responses

Phase 3
- Wider school sample across the UK
- Quantitative
- N = 400
Methodology

- Interviews – Thematic Analysis

- Psychometrics
  1. Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 2001)
  2. Neo PI 3 Personality Test (McCrae & Costa, 1992)
  3. Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg, 1993)
Implications & Recommendations

- Young People
- Police
- Teachers
- Counselling & Social Services
Thank you!

Any Questions?

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