

# Online child sexual abuse and exploitation an analysis of



**Monograph on current problems of online child sexual abuse and exploitation:** warning signs, guidelines for action and prevention, within the framework of 4NSEEK, Forensic Against Sexual Exploitation of Children  
[www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse](http://www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse).



#  **CHILD ABUSE**

# Online child sexual abuse and exploitation

## About this guide

### Objective

**This monograph aims to analyse the problem of online child sexual abuse and exploitation.** It is focused on helping professionals working with children and adolescents to understand how online sexual abuse happens, as well as to improve their skills in preventing and responding to the wide range of situations of abuse that currently exist, and contribute to better educating society as a whole.



This publication is part of the 4NSEEK European project (<https://4nseek.incibe.es/>) and the awareness raising campaign #StopChildAbuse [www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse](http://www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse)

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<https://www.fapmi.es>  
<https://www.ecpat-spain.org>



<https://www.ehu.eus/es/web/eukidsonline/>  
<https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/eu-kids-online/participating-countries/national-languages/spain>

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## About this guide

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# 1. Context of online child sexual abuse and exploitation

## 1.1 Introduction

**Online child sexual abuse is a reality.** Every day, everywhere, content, images and videos that depict children as the tragic victims of sexual abuse are being disseminated<sup>1</sup>.

It is a difficult situation to accept, and even more so when the child sexual abuse materials that have been located and seized are just the tip of the iceberg<sup>2</sup>. **Many more crimes of this nature go unnoticed** by most of the population, both in quantitative terms<sup>3,4</sup>, and in the wide variety of circumstances where online abuse takes place. Many adults, including professionals who work with children, are unaware of the problem, since it is an issue that many prefer to ignore because it is such a complex and sensitive one. At the same time there is another growing belief that it is a serious problem but a

distant one. The fact is that **any child can be a victim**<sup>5</sup> of online sexual abuse and what is needed is to be realistic about its presence and take action.

That is why **it is necessary to raise social awareness** about the issue and transmit guidelines to prevent and respond to it. The family, schools, groups of professionals who work with children and adolescents, and the community as a whole, have a part to play in protecting children. Each and every one of us can use our roles and skills to contribute towards their digital education, joining them in their learning processes, which in turn enables us to detect any possible abusive behaviours or abuse cases and so act appropriately and in time to prevent it or at least mitigate their impact.

## 1.2 The problem

**Online child sexual abuse and exploitation** refers to situations of sexual abuse that affect persons under 18 years of age, and to the production of such abuse images or videos and their spreading online<sup>6</sup>. Situations of child sexual abuse and exploitation include incitement or coercion to engage in sexual activities, trafficking of children for sexual purposes, commercial sexual exploitation, other sexual activities, or sexual displays or materials<sup>7</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> UNICEF: Children in a Digital World. The state of the world's children 2017. [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC\\_2017\\_ENG\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2017_ENG_WEB.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Europol: Online sexual coercion and extortion as a form of crime affecting children: law enforcement perspective <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-sexual-coercion-and-extortion-form-of-crime-affecting-children-law-enforcement-perspective>

<sup>3</sup> Internet Watch Foundation: Annual report 2018: Once upon a year. [https://www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/2019-04/Once upon a year - IWF Annual Report 2018.pdf](https://www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/2019-04/Once%20upon%20a%20year%20-%20IWF%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> INHOPE: Annual report 2019. [https://inhope.org/media/pages/the-facts/download-our-whitepapers/e09e3a0238-1603115653/2020.10.19\\_ih\\_annualreport\\_digital.pdf](https://inhope.org/media/pages/the-facts/download-our-whitepapers/e09e3a0238-1603115653/2020.10.19_ih_annualreport_digital.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Key findings of the experts working group in 4NSEEK

<sup>6</sup> Europol: Child sexual exploitation <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/child-sexual-exploitation>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations: Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 34. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

According to the European legislative framework<sup>8</sup>, this context also includes possessing digital content of child sexual abuse or the intention to acquire such material, distributing this type of material and offering it, and producing it or collaborating in such a way as to make this possible.

It is closely linked to **other concepts**:

### Sexual coercion and extortion of children<sup>9,10</sup>

Blackmail with the purpose of getting images or videos with sexual connotations from children and adolescents, meetings for physical abuse or money. The blackmail takes the form of threats, such as publicly exposing previously obtained intimate images of the child (confessions, images, etc.).

### Online grooming<sup>11</sup>

Process in which an adult makes contact with a child or adolescent on the Internet, where the adult can even portray as another child, seeking to establish a relationship of trust to enable later blackmail for sexual purposes.

### Child sexual abuse material<sup>12</sup>

This refers to content that shows acts of sexual abuse of children and adolescents and/or focuses on their genital or anal areas (CSAM), along child sexual exploitation material (CSEM). This term also includes other content of a normal or everyday nature that is used for sexual purposes.

### Self-generated sexual content<sup>13</sup>

Cases where children and adolescents take images of themselves in poses that are compromising or for sexual purposes. This includes voluntary and coerced content. There is always the risk that such content can circulate online or offline and so put children at risk, or be used as a tool for extortion by other persons.

Online child sexual abuse is a **constantly evolving problem**<sup>14</sup>, due to the opportunities offered by advances in technology and the Internet. It is a medium accessible to the entire population worldwide, allowing for unlimited communications, without borders or time constraints. Furthermore, new techniques and applications are created on a daily basis. Although not intentionally designed to conduct criminal activities, they end up being utilised to generate and distribute abusive content. An example of this is the use of the communication services in videogames with conversations, voice chats and video calls being abused to distribute intimate or sexually explicit content of other people without their consent.

Another factor that interfere is the frequency and amount of use of technology. **Children habitually use** this type of technology, sometimes on a massive scale<sup>15</sup>, which enables criminals to contact them by using the same platforms and services where they interact. Offenders can then entice children on a children's social network or in an online team game. At the same time, the false feelings of security, anonymity and power that the Internet offers can reduce social restrictions and encourage excessive trust in children and adolescents, who out of naiveté or ignorance can become overly relaxed in their responses to contacts or requests from other people, including strangers.

<sup>8</sup> Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/93/2011-12-17>

<sup>9</sup> Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter H.4.iii Sexual extortion of children. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>10</sup> Europol: Online sexual coercion and extortion of children <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/child-sexual-exploitation/online-sexual-coercion-and-extortion-of-children>

<sup>11</sup> Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter H.4.i Grooming. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>12</sup> Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter F.4.i Child sexual abuse material/child sexual exploitation material; And chapter F.4.iii Sexualised images of children/child erotica. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>13</sup> Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter F.4.iv Self-generated sexual content/material. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>14</sup> Europol: Child sexual exploitation. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/child-sexual-exploitation>

<sup>15</sup> EU Kids Online 2020. Survey results from 19 countries. <https://www.is4k.es/sites/default/files/contenidos/informe-eukidsonline-eu-2020.pdf>

Finally, high-risk practices such as sexting<sup>16</sup> (sending self-generated images with sexual connotations via the Internet), or children offering self-generated sexual content in exchange for gifts or money on the social networks<sup>17</sup> need to be highlighted. These are becoming socially normalised among children. However, they are effectively **new ways for offenders to obtain sexual abuse material**. Every intimate image or video that is created or shared opens the door to potential uncontrolled dissemination, extortion or abuse.



### More information about techniques of enticement and production of content:

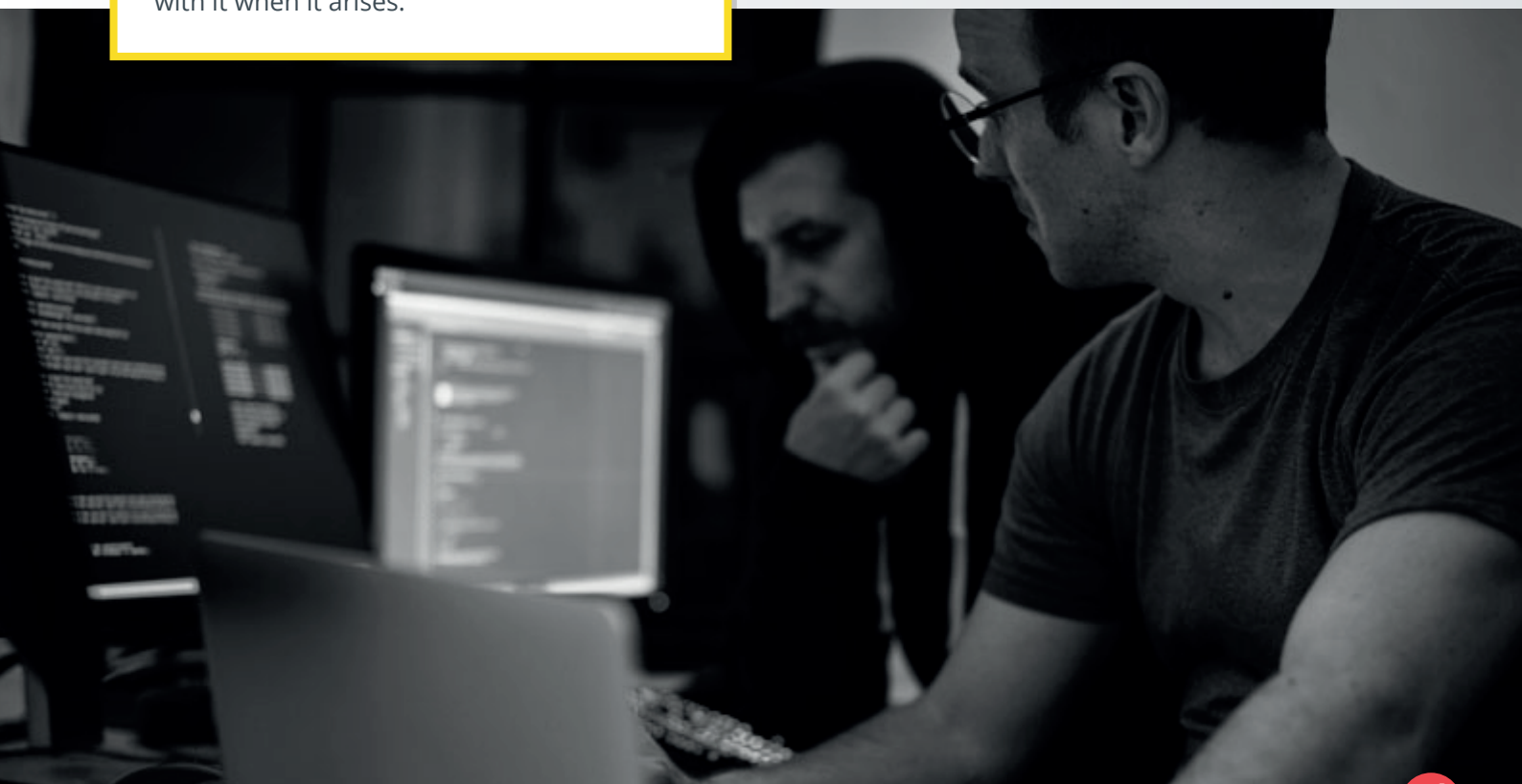
PAGE. 12

Parents' awareness of the risks of online sexual abuse is low<sup>18</sup>. They see such situations as very serious but distant or highly unlikely to happen in their immediate surroundings, or affect their own children. This belief poses serious challenges to raising awareness about the problem, how to prevent it, detecting possible signs of abuse and dealing with it when it arises.



### Current trends

The processes used to entice and obtain sexual abuse material are increasingly rapid and affect many victims at the same time<sup>19,20</sup>. Offenders often use methodical approaches that they simultaneously or sequentially repeat with hundreds of child users. This way the probabilities of getting content increases, thus making it more likely to be an effective and productive practice.



<sup>16</sup>. Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter F.4.v Sexting. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>17</sup>. What is OnlyFans? What parents need to know <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-onlyfans-what-parents-need-to-know/>

<sup>18</sup>. EUKidsOnline: Las familias en la convergencia mediática: competencias, mediación, oportunidades y riesgos online. <https://www.is4k.es/sites/default/files/contenidos/informe-eu-kids-online-mediacion.pdf>

<sup>19</sup>. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. June 2013 [https://www.norfolkscb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CEOP\\_Threat-Assessment\\_CSE\\_JUN2013.pdf](https://www.norfolkscb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CEOP_Threat-Assessment_CSE_JUN2013.pdf)

<sup>20</sup>. Thorn: Sextortion. Summary findings from a 2017 survey of 2,097 survivors [https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sextortion\\_Wave2Report\\_121919.pdf](https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sextortion_Wave2Report_121919.pdf)

# 1. Context of online child sexual abuse and exploitation



## 1.3 Characteristics of online child sexual abuse victims

Before going any further, it is essential to emphasise that there is **no typical profile of victims** in online child sexual abuse or exploitation<sup>21</sup>. It can happen to any child at any age, in any family or any socioeconomic context. Nowadays, the lines separating infancy, pre-adolescence and youth are increasingly blurred and access to the Internet is widespread amongst children and adolescents. In fact, the conclusions of the group of experts of the 4NSEEK project show a tremendous degree of diversity in terms of the frequency and type of problematic situation, regarding individual characteristics of the child such as sex or age.

For example, it would be logical to think that a crime based on the use of connected devices would lead to an **incidence that progressively increases with age** and the growing use of such technologies. This habit would increase the likelihood of contact with strangers, linked to the increased interest in sexuality that is normal in adolescence.

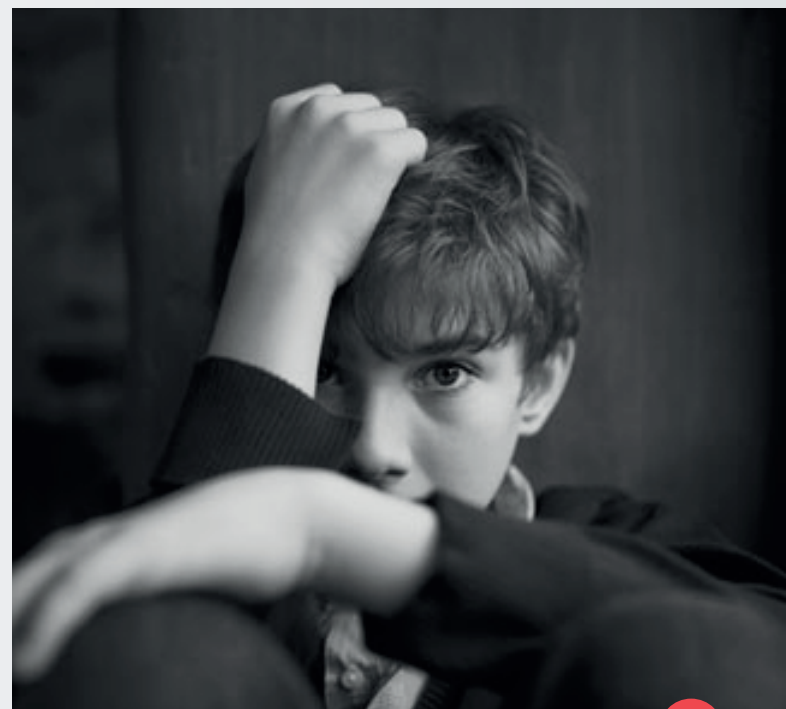
However, **children of increasingly younger ages** are also affected, both by the content produced from direct sexual abuse, and by the sexualised use of general or everyday content<sup>22</sup>, such as images or videos shared on the Internet or social networks by families (sharenting), or in other social contexts of children and adolescents.

Adolescence is a period in a person's development and sexual identity characterised by a growing interest in exploring sexuality, and so adolescents can end up accepting challenges or putting themselves in situations of risk, less likely among adults. Other **aspects of this phase**, such as difficulties in anticipating the potential future consequences of their actions, may cause young people to make risky decisions, breaking rules or socially accepted limits.

A clear example of this can be found in sexting. This is now generally regarded as a normalised activity in adolescents' exploration of their sexuality or intimate relationships, although there is an inherent danger of self-objectification in this activity, and significant risks are involved.

There is a certain tendency to idealise sexuality, and adolescents can be influenced by hyper-sexualised stereotypes in society, particularly those implicit in social networks and leisure content such as videogames, feature movies and series<sup>23</sup>.

Even when adolescents become aware of a problematic situation, many of them ignore or at the very most they make some minor adjustments to their privacy settings, but only a small minority actually report it<sup>24</sup>.



<sup>21</sup> Europol: Online sexual coercion and extortion as a form of crime affecting children: law enforcement perspective <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-sexual-coercion-and-extortion-form-of-crime-affecting-children-law-enforcement-perspective>

<sup>22</sup> Red Barnet: Everyday pictures of children in sexualizing context 2020 [https://storage.eun.org/resources/upload/359/20200512\\_110302149\\_359\\_Everyday\\_pictures\\_SCDK.pdf](https://storage.eun.org/resources/upload/359/20200512_110302149_359_Everyday_pictures_SCDK.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Common Sense Media: Cuties <https://www.common sense media.org/movie-reviews/cuties>

<sup>24</sup> EUKidsOnline: Actividades, mediación, oportunidades y riesgos online de los menores en la era de la convergencia mediática. <https://www.is4k.es/sites/default/files/contenidos/informe-eukidsonline-2018.pdf>

**Criminals are well aware of all these factors and characteristics** and use them as weapons to achieve their goals through deceit, suggestion and threats, blackmail and coercion.

Online sexual abuse can happen at any age, but the group of experts at 4NSEEK have emphasised certain data:

### Creation of child sexual abuse material

this can affect children of any age, with greater frequency amongst children in more vulnerable conditions, and increasingly boys and girls of up to 2 years of age. The impact of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the context of travel and tourism in South Asia and South America is high, with an increased tendency for (live) streaming of child sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse to order<sup>25</sup>.

### Grooming

Greater frequency of processes designed to facilitate sexual coercion and extortion in children aged 10 and older. In some cases, it may be related to problems of low self-esteem, school bullying and self-harming, as explained later.

### Sexual coercion and extortion of children

The number of victims increases at the age of 14 and upwards. In some cases, it can be linked to dissemination without consent of intimate or sexually explicit content produced by sexting and sexualised cyberbullying.

### Self-generated sexual content involving children and adolescents (sexting)

More common amongst children aged 14 and older.

One of the factors that lead children to produce this type of material is the need for validation by peers (possibly related to lack of self-esteem), exchange of intimate material amongst peers, or pressure from coercion, threats and extortion.

Factors that can increase a victim's vulnerability<sup>26,27,28</sup>

Some key factors linked to a child's emotional and psychological development can increase the risk of experiencing these types of problems. Inadequate development of self-esteem and social skills, feelings of loneliness, depression, difficulties in relationships, peer pressure, lack of information appropriate for the child's age about healthy relationships and sexuality, questioning of sexual identity, can lead the child to search for affection, validation and attention from the wrong person. Beliefs about idealised stereotypes of sexuality and love can also have a negative influence.

Profiles at greater risk also include: children affected by family conflicts and problems, children in disadvantaged socioeconomic environments, in residential foster care centres or other institutions, persons with mental illnesses, with intellectual or developmental disabilities, or a history of previous sexual abuse, bullying or physical abuse, and children who run a risk seeking adventure, exploring sexual contacts while thinking that they are in control, and can even appear to be extroverted and sure of themselves.



Once the abuse starts, children who find it hard or impossible to ask for help or report problems that affect them, are more vulnerable, along with those children who do not have an adequate family or social support network.

<sup>25</sup> Europol: Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) 2020 <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/internet-organised-crime-threat-assessment-iocta-2020>

<sup>26</sup> Red.es: Monográfico Grooming <https://www.is4k.es/de-utilidad/recursos/recursos-didacticos-redes>.

<sup>27</sup> Save the Children: Abuso sexual infantil: Manual de formación para profesionales [https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/imce/docs/manual\\_abuso\\_sexual.pdf](https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/imce/docs/manual_abuso_sexual.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Online risk, harm and vulnerability: Reflections on the evidence base for child Internet safety policy. [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62278/1/\\_lse.ac.uk\\_storage\\_LIBRARY\\_Secondary\\_libfile\\_shared\\_repository\\_Content\\_Livingstone,%20S\\_Online%20risk\\_Livingstone\\_Online%20risk\\_2015.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62278/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_Livingstone,%20S_Online%20risk_Livingstone_Online%20risk_2015.pdf)

# 1. Context of online child sexual abuse and exploitation



## 1.4 Type of online child sexual abuse material

The types of material of child and adolescent sexual abuse found on the Internet are difficult to categorise, due to the complex and highly sensitive nature of this issue. In any case, it is important to address them so as to generate more social awareness of the problem and promote active prevention.

### Child sexual abuse materials deriving from contact abuse.

Images or videos with explicit sexual connotations, created in person and obtained by abusing of a position of power over the child, using emotionally coercive strategies, or forced acts involving psychological or physical violence.

### Sexual abuse materials obtained through deception, threats, coercion or extortion via the Internet.

Images or videos with explicit sexual connotations created by the child, forced to do so by coercion, bullying, grooming and extortion. A sensitive image or some kind of confidential information or secret that was previously obtained is commonly used as a tool to force the child to provide other, more explicit content or money, in exchange for not exposing the information in the child's environment or making it public on the Internet<sup>29</sup>.

### Willingly self-generated sexual contents involving the own child or adolescent.

Images or videos that are sexually explicit or have sexual connotations which are generated by the child during sexting, and that have been disseminated without consent, either accidentally or when the person who receives such content spreads it without consent.

### Everyday content placed in sexualised contexts.

Images or videos in normal or everyday contexts, taken without sexual intentions and that have no explicit sexual connotations. They are generated by children themselves or by other persons in their surroundings, and are then published or stored on a digital medium.

Examples include family photos or videos at the swimming pool or bath, or other more inoffensive images where the child is dressed in their school uniform or simply playing in a park.

The children appearing in the content are turned into victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation when the material is placed in a sexualised context. Examples include mixing them with pornographic material for adults, when sexual comments are added to them, or identifying time stamps in videos of moments in which children are briefly shown in compromising positions.

The algorithms for selecting and recommending content in digital services play a role in disseminating this type of content. This has led some video platforms to take measures to minimise or prevent this type of abusive usage<sup>30</sup>.



<sup>29</sup> Europol: Online sexual coercion and extortion as a form of crime affecting children: law enforcement perspective <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-sexual-coercion-and-extortion-form-of-crime-affecting-children-law-enforcement-perspective>

<sup>30</sup> YouTube Official Blog: More updates on our actions related to the safety of minors on YouTube <https://blog.youtube/news-and-events/more-updates-on-our-actions-related-to>

It is evident then that child sexual abuse content can include family or everyday images, posed, partial or complete nudes, content with individual or group sexual activity, in which other children, adults and even animals may participate, and may even involve sadistic and violent behaviour or bestialism.

The main international systems for categorising child sexual abuse material are as follows:

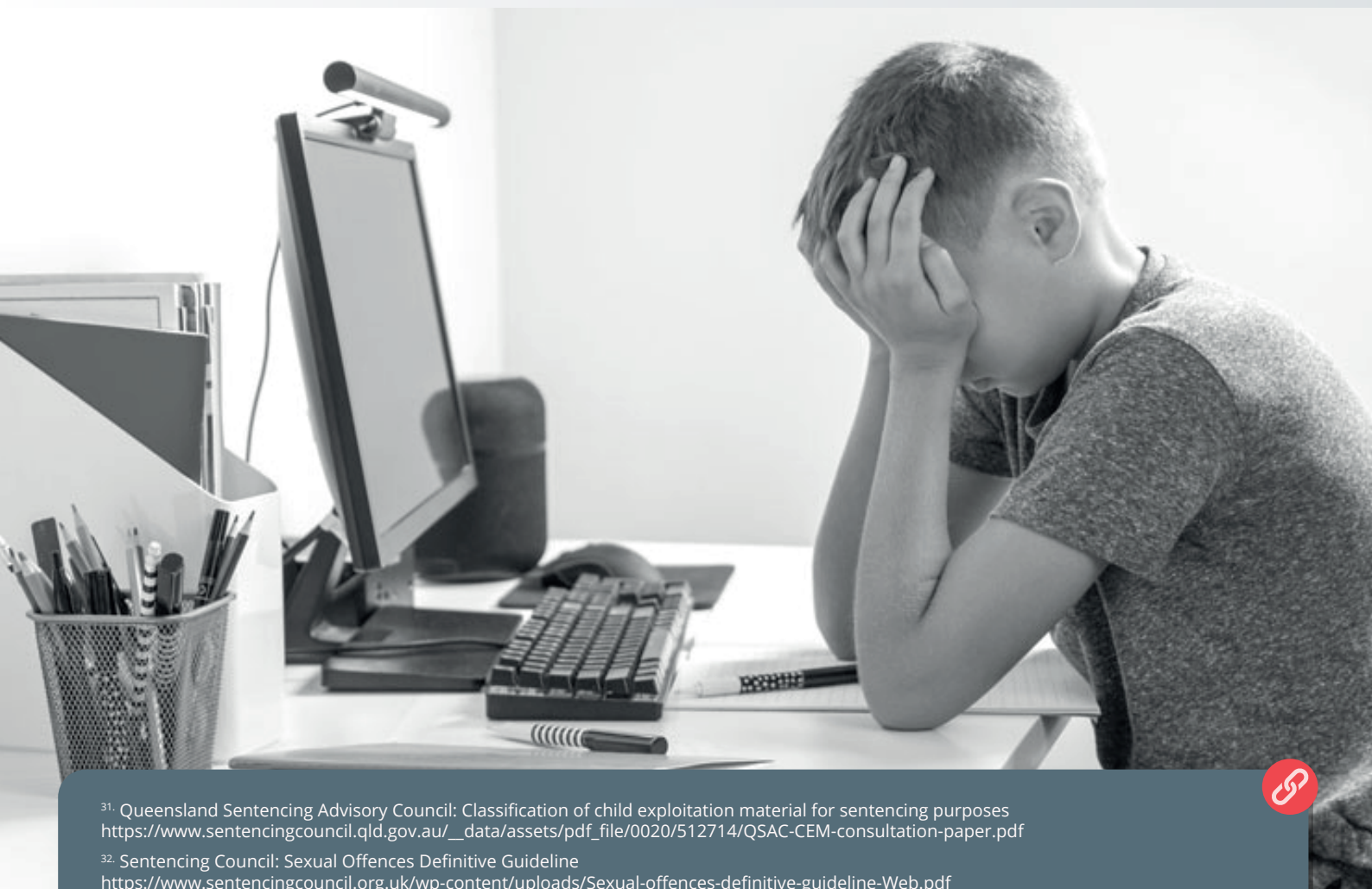
INTERPOL Baseline<sup>31</sup>, the main international standard.

UK Sentencing Advisory Panel Scale<sup>32</sup>, classification geared towards measuring criminality.

COPINE clinical scale<sup>33</sup>, classification designed to measure the potential effects on criminals and victims.

To conclude, the phenomenon of computer-generated child sexual abuse material<sup>34</sup> should also be mentioned, since it shows children participating in sexual activities or behaving in a sexualised manner.

In this particular case, the content produced does not involve real contact, but rather an artificially created one with simulations of real persons. Although a real child is not hurt in this type of content, it does contribute towards the sexualisation of children and adolescents, and can reduce the perceived seriousness of child sexual abuse and exploitation, especially amongst potential aggressors.



<sup>31</sup>. Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council: Classification of child exploitation material for sentencing purposes [https://www.sentencingcouncil.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/512714/QSAC-CEM-consultation-paper.pdf](https://www.sentencingcouncil.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/512714/QSAC-CEM-consultation-paper.pdf)

<sup>32</sup>. Sentencing Council: Sexual Offences Definitive Guideline <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sexual-offences-definitive-guideline-Web.pdf>

<sup>33</sup>. COPINE Project: Typology of Paedophile Picture Collections [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ethel\\_Quayle/publication/237641206\\_Typology\\_of\\_Paedophile\\_Picture\\_Collections/links/00463528a5f4a8b866000000/Typology-of-Paedophile-Picture-Collections.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ethel_Quayle/publication/237641206_Typology_of_Paedophile_Picture_Collections/links/00463528a5f4a8b866000000/Typology-of-Paedophile-Picture-Collections.pdf)

<sup>34</sup>. Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter F.4.ii Computer/digitally generated child sexual abuse material. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

# 1. Context of online child sexual abuse and exploitation



## 1.5 Methods of enticement and obtaining child sexual abuse material

The techniques used to acquire or force others to generate such content are as diverse as the creativity of the offenders. They range from simple methods such as searching for everyday content on the Internet, or explicitly contacting children online, to complex, carefully prepared strategies to attract their attention, deceive them and then coerce them.

### Child sexual abuse material obtained in person.

One of the first techniques for generating this type of content is based on physical contact with children and adolescents in a situation of sexual abuse. The criminal makes use of a relationship that is close or where they have power over the victim, may use verbal violence, emotional and spiritual abuse or physical force, deceit and secrecy in order to abuse the child<sup>35</sup>, and may record explicit images or videos of the abuse for personal consumption and online exploitation. Secrecy can be expressly forced or come from different reasons: a victim who do not recognize the situation, fear, shame, guilt, etc.

The aggressor may be a member of the family, or a professional working in the child's environment, or someone who contacted the child via the Internet as part of a process of grooming or child sexual coercion and extortion. They may also be someone who contacts vulnerable families to select possible victims, or may be a member of a child trafficking network for sexual exploitation<sup>36</sup>. There may also be the offer of live streaming, or of sexual abuse of children and adolescents to order<sup>37</sup>, or sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism<sup>38</sup>, even when the online aggressor travels to abuse personally the same

child. A notable feature of the latter case is the large amount of content produced in South Asia and South America.

### Sexual abuse materials obtained through deception, threats, coercion or extortion via the Internet.

This category includes techniques used in grooming, online child sexual coercion and extortion, or in any other type of solicitation of children and adolescents for sexual purposes. They are methods in which a child is deceived, threatened or blackmailed by another person, an adult or another child, on the Internet.

The process normally starts in the digital spaces where children normally interact, and can take the form of direct contact or via a mutual friend. Social networks, online videogames, language learning forums, fan clubs, etc., are online meeting places for almost all children nowadays. In many cases, children also use high-risk applications such as contact and dating apps, or others where there is anonymous communication with strangers. An adult can easily enter any of these platforms, and can even pretend to be a child.

Although it is not a precondition, aggressors often create false profiles to attract children, e.g., portraying themselves as younger persons with similar interests to the victim's. It is not difficult on the Internet to identify the characteristics of more vulnerable children and adolescents, their interests, the ways they interact, and their weaknesses. Criminals simply reproduce them, using images of children to appear more credible. They may sometimes contact children without pretending to be someone else, because talking to an older person can also be attractive, flattering or interesting.

<sup>35</sup>. Australian Institute of Family Studies: Conceptualising the prevention of child sexual abuse [https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/download/5bb2f7760724b150faee97eef3bf9afcfcd4cb50e87d7fbab4096c71055c5c82c/1704205/OA\\_Quada\\_2015\\_Conceptualising\\_the\\_prevention\\_of\\_child\\_sexual.pdf](https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/download/5bb2f7760724b150faee97eef3bf9afcfcd4cb50e87d7fbab4096c71055c5c82c/1704205/OA_Quada_2015_Conceptualising_the_prevention_of_child_sexual.pdf)

<sup>36</sup>. Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter K. Trafficking of Children. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>37</sup>. Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter G. Live Online Child Sexual Abuse. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

<sup>38</sup>. Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Chapter I. Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Context of Travel and Tourism. <http://luxembourgguidelines.org>

The typical phases of these situations are outlined below<sup>39,40,41,42</sup> although it should be noted that they are not all necessary in each and every case, and do not necessarily follow this sequence. Also, bear in mind that there are situations in which the aggressor gets hold of intimate material, secrets or content for blackmail by unauthorised access to the victim's accounts (hacking), or from content published on social networks or other public websites (overexposure). Access to such material can speed up, or negate the need for some of the phases of these processes.

In general, after the **first contact**, offenders try to move to a platform where communication is more private and encrypted<sup>43</sup> (e.g., an instant messaging tool) where they attempt to gain the child's trust in different ways. They may try to establish a **false friendship** that gradually progresses with gestures of affection, care and concern, virtual gifts or physical presents, until a **supposedly close and intimate relationship** is established. At this point, the abuser may force the victim to keep the relationship a secret, and may also try to socially isolate them from their peer groups, family and friends. Their language may take a stronger tone, and touch upon sexual issues.

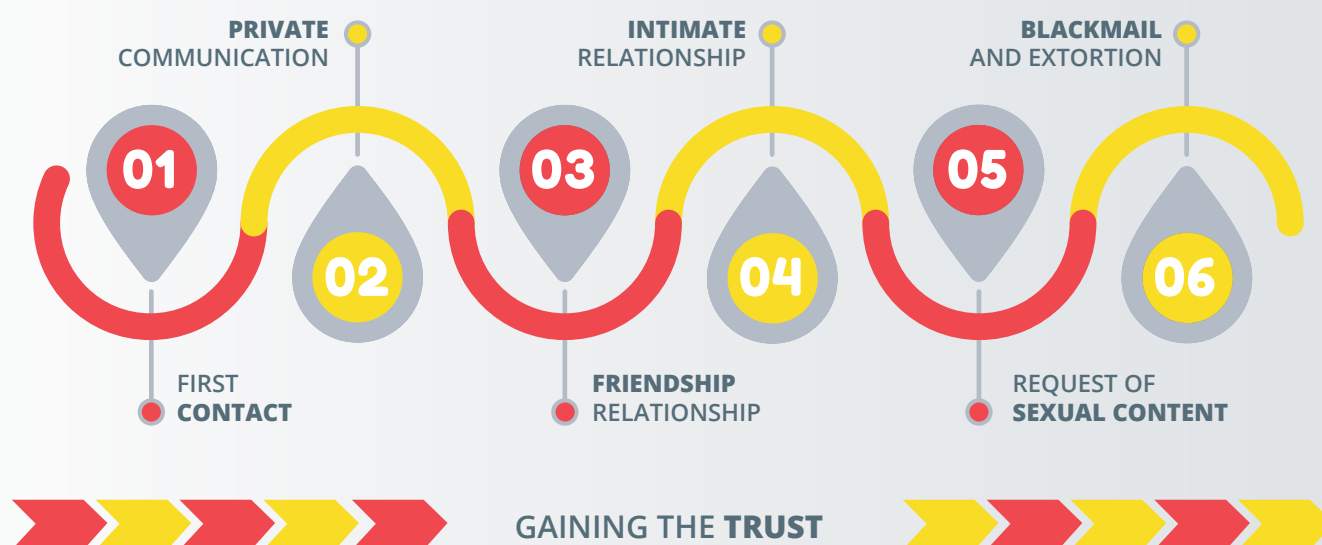
On other occasions the aggressor may go from the initial contact to making a direct proposal to the child to engage

in some kind of virtual sexual activity<sup>44</sup> or show sexual images or videos that are supposedly their own, and ask them to give an equivalent response. It is important to remember that pre-adolescents and adolescents are discovering their sexuality and feel curiosity about intimate and sexual relationships. This can lead them to accept high-risk propositions, even from complete strangers.

The adult asks the child to share some kind of secret or create and send the **first sexual content**, such as a pose with hardly any clothes on, or a gesture or action with sexual connotations. If the child accepts and then creates and sends the image or video, the aggressor now has a weapon to carry on demanding more content by blackmail or extortion. The victim may then be scared that the aggressor will spread the material or publicise the conversations and personal data that they have shared. The child may be scared as well of the reaction from their family or the authorities. They may even believe that they are in a real romantic relationship and continue producing more content, despite it is really a situation of abuse and exploitation.



More information about grooming:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/grooming/>



<sup>39</sup>. Cyberspace Research Unit University of Central Lancashire: A typology of child cybersexexploitation and online grooming practices. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/898c/0e9791e5d227dd875129ca05cf7cae08d4c4.pdf>

<sup>40</sup>. Red.es: Monográfico Grooming <https://www.is4k.es/de-utilidad/recursos/recursos-didacticos-redes>.

<sup>41</sup>. Family Insights: 6 Stages of Online Grooming | Is Your Child Safe?

<https://knowledge-centre.familyinsights.net/knowledge-base/6-stages-of-online-grooming-is-your-child-safe/>

<sup>42</sup>. Europol: Online sexual coercion and extortion as a form of crime affecting children: law enforcement perspective.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-sexual-coercion-and-extortion-form-of-crime-affecting-children-law-enforcement-perspective>

<sup>43</sup>. Child Abuse and Neglect: Forensic Issues in Evidence, Impact and Management

<https://books.google.es/books?id=qTGGDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA63>

<sup>44</sup>. European Online Grooming Project: Final Report.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257941820\\_European\\_Online\\_Grooming\\_Project\\_-\\_Final\\_Report](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257941820_European_Online_Grooming_Project_-_Final_Report)

## Willingly self-generated sexual content involving the child or adolescent

In these situations, the aggressor can enter social networks or other communities and websites commonly used by children and adolescents to search for **content with sexual connotations generated by children** while sexting. The children may voluntarily share the material in a context that is now called personal overexposure to the Internet, or the content may be accidentally or deliberately disseminated or published without the child's consent.

This **practice entails a large number of risks**, but the child's curiosity about sexuality and social pressures to please their partner, respond to contents received in the same way, fit in with their peers, or seek attention from someone who they like may lead the child to exhibit

themselves before the camera. The content is stored in their devices, and may be lost or accidentally end up in the hands of the wrong people. They may also share images with their partner, with people they like, or with other people, who then can decide to publish the content without their consent, for fun or for revenge.

Whatever the case, an increasingly large quantity of this type of materials end up being published on the Internet<sup>45</sup>, and can fall into the hands of criminals who can include them in websites, lists, forums or groups and messaging channels where child sexual abuse material is shared.



More information about *sexting*:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/sexting-sending-nudes/>



## Everyday content placed in a sexualised context

Criminals can also use the same techniques as those mentioned above to **look for everyday images or videos on the Internet**. The material is not sexually explicit and may be published on social networks, video platforms, blogs or catalogues of children's products. Sharenting, or the mass publication of family photos by adults, is a major source of material.

Criminals browse until they find content that can be sexualised, as for instance adding time stamps to videos of the brief periods where a child appears in slightly compromising positions, adding textual comments of sexual abuse, or combining the content with pornographic material for an adult audience<sup>46</sup>.

As in the previous case, they save the images and videos on private or shared file servers, or prepare them for sale or distribution via different child sexual abuse material channels.



More information about privacy:  
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/skills-advice/privacy-child>.

<sup>45</sup>. Internet Watch Foundation: Annual Report 2019

[https://www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/2020-04/IWF\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2020\\_Low-res-Digital\\_AW\\_6mb.pdf](https://www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/2020-04/IWF_Annual_Report_2020_Low-res-Digital_AW_6mb.pdf)

<sup>46</sup>. Red Barnet: Everyday pictures of children in sexualizing context 2020

[https://storage.eun.org/resources/upload/359/20200512\\_110302149\\_359\\_Everyday\\_pictures\\_SCDK.pdf](https://storage.eun.org/resources/upload/359/20200512_110302149_359_Everyday_pictures_SCDK.pdf)

# 1. Context of online child sexual abuse and exploitation

## 1.6 Tools and techniques used to spread child sexual abuse material

Criminals can store the content privately on physical media with a large capacity such as hard disks and portable usb devices. They may also use cloud storage services, which enable them to share the content without borders or time limits.

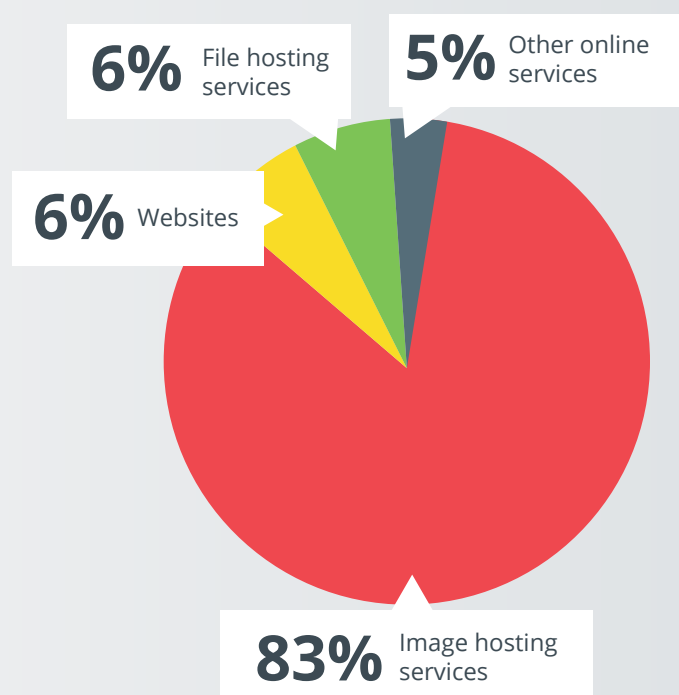
We are not talking about an uncontrolled environment, thanks to the fact that regulation of online communications is increasing every day. But just like any other medium, there are channels where criminals can operate.

The tools that criminals use depend to a great extent on their preferences. At the same time, they may also vary according to how concerned they are for their own security, and the need to cover their tracks and avoid being caught. Possible categorisations of criminals can be defined<sup>47</sup>: Simple Viewers, people who have a sexual interest in children and view child sexual abuse material; Open Traders, criminals who share and distribute child sexual abuse content on the Internet; Closed Traders, criminals who distribute illegal content, with high security levels, using restricted access tools and communities; and Experts, offenders with or without a long criminal record who are very careful about their security.

Many of the channels they use are social networks or instant messaging apps, which generally include encryption functionalities as part of the communications process. The criminals responsible for generating, obtaining or distributing the content contact people who want to consume it. They often organise private groups or use private language codes to talk in code about the subject, thus evading security protocols.

They keep child sexual abuse images and videos in the cloud where they can store them in encrypted format, easily share them and even view them online. There is data that shows that 83% of child sexual abuse content is stored in image hosting services, 6% in file hosting services, 6% on websites and 5% in other online services<sup>48</sup>.

Advances in technology have also created new options for generating, distributing and consuming child sexual abuse material, such as organised live streaming or child sexual abuse to order.



<sup>47</sup>. Child abuse material and the Internet: Cyberpsychology of online child related sex offending  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mike\\_Berry2/publication/277774727\\_Aiken\\_Moran\\_Berry\\_2011/links/5572ff1508aeb6d8c017af5e/Aiken-Moran-Berry-2011.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mike_Berry2/publication/277774727_Aiken_Moran_Berry_2011/links/5572ff1508aeb6d8c017af5e/Aiken-Moran-Berry-2011.pdf)

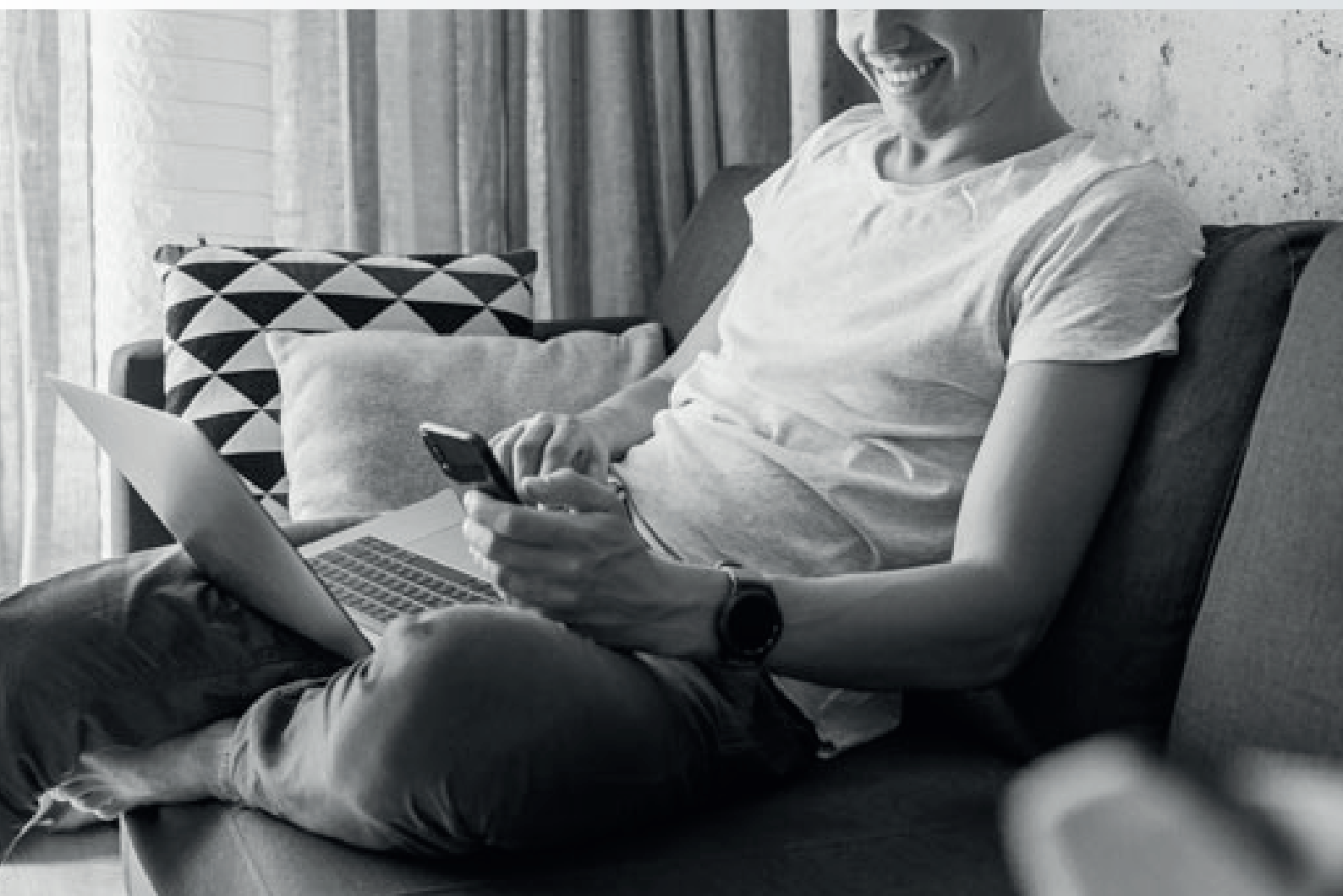
<sup>48</sup>. INHOPE: Annual report 2019.  
[https://www.inhope.org/media/pages/the-facts/download-our-whitepapers/e09e3a0238-1603115653/2020.10.19\\_ih\\_annualreport\\_digital.pdf](https://www.inhope.org/media/pages/the-facts/download-our-whitepapers/e09e3a0238-1603115653/2020.10.19_ih_annualreport_digital.pdf)

Other methods for exchanging material are less intuitive. Bear in mind that the Internet is a much larger network than it appears to be, including the so called **deep web**<sup>49</sup>, with spaces that cannot be freely accessed. They are kept inside a website or server with restricted access to users who have a login and password, so that their content does not appear on web search results. They are usually spaces that are used to house much of the data needed to operate the services we use every day, such as electronic mail or online shops, which obviously need to be protected with complex protocols and encryption.

However, there are people who make use of this type of technology for illegal, malicious or harmful ends, such as exchanging child sexual abuse material inside what is known as the dark web. In the dark web, criminals use encrypted environments that require specific browsers or tools for access. Such environments, like TOR, give the users greater possibilities for anonymity and also allow them to access clear net resources anonymously.

Another commonly used tool is peer-to-peer (P2P) communication networks, where users can share information without intermediaries, thus making it more difficult to detect this type of criminal activity. Some of these have evolved to become complex closed communities, where access is restricted to persons who receive an invitation from a member, normally with the condition that they provide some new content of child or adolescent sexual abuse.

To conclude, another notable channel for child sexual abuse is normal everyday content on widespread public websites, video platforms and social networks (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.). As mentioned above, this type of content can be sexualised by adding sexual comments, identifying briefly compromising postures in a video with tags or time stamps, or by including everyday images of children and adolescents in material surrounded by pornographic content for adults.



49. INCIBE – IS4K: Protege a los menores de contenidos inadecuados en la Deep Web o Internet profunda.  
<https://www.is4k.es/blog/protege-los-menores-de-contenidos-inadecuados-en-la-deep-web-o-internet-profunda>



## 2. Preventing online child sexual abuse and exploitation

Situations of online child and adolescent sexual abuse can happen to anyone. They are often difficult to identify, complicated to manage and resolve, and may have serious consequences for the child's development and their later life. That is why the involvement of society as a whole is essential in preventing and reducing this type of risk. Besides, it is useful that families, educators, other professionals, and children themselves are informed about the support services available.

### 2.1 Recommendations to families

#### 1. Be aware of the problem.

Being aware of the reality of online child sexual abuse and exploitation is vital in helping to reduce risks, as it is accepting that any child and adolescent can become a victim.

#### 2. Give priority to the child's rights and their protection.

Appreciate their rights<sup>50</sup>, including their rights to privacy, promoting the need to think about the possible long-term consequences before sharing images and videos of children and adolescents on the Internet.

#### 3. Create a climate of trust.

Offer the child a family support network where they can feel safe and protected and can rely on if problems arise. Begin the conversation about online safety early, using age-appropriate references and developing further over time. Always leave the door open for communication.

#### 4. Develop healthy social skills.

Encourage the development of their self-esteem, empathy, critical thinking, and assertiveness, to adequately, safely and respectfully communicate and relate to others, developing a positive digital identity.

#### 5. Promote peer involvement.

Empower children to develop a sense of responsibility to enable them to protect each other. Their role is vital when asking for help with possible cases of abuse.

#### 6. Parental mediation for digital learning.

Understand the Internet as one more resource that you need to be up to date with, know about the child's online activities so as to guide and accompany them, agree to rules that are adapted to their age and level of maturity, and ensure that they are respected, thus helping them to use the Internet autonomously, responsibly and safely.

#### 7. Configure devices appropriately.

Learn basic cybersecurity guidelines for mobile phones, tablets and computers, including safe unlocking methods, protection of their accounts and passwords, privacy, security and digital wellbeing options, and assess the suitability of parental control when necessary.

#### 8. Reduce risks in their digital routine.

Provide information about the risks and possible medium-term and long-term consequences of practices such as sexting. Encourage the development of a healthy sexuality which is respectful for themselves and for others.

#### 9. Promote self-protection strategies.

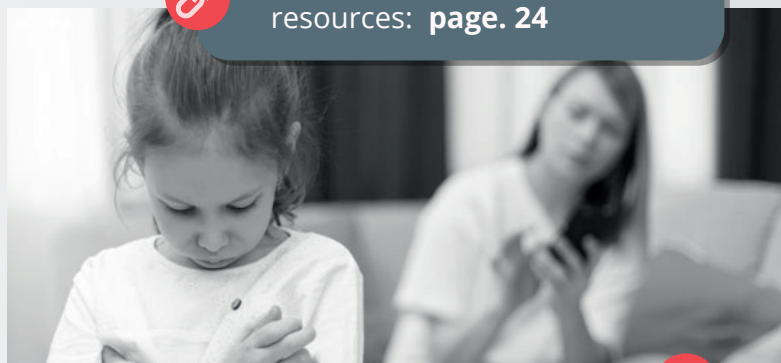
Talk naturally about healthy relationships, sexuality and the risks that can arise in the Internet, this helping them to identify and analyse potential high-risk contacts or requests.

#### 10. Ask for professional help in the event of a potential situation of sexual abuse.

If you notice high-risk behaviours, you need to be aware of the seriousness of the situation and ask for professional support and guidance. If you suspect that there is a situation of sexual abuse, contact the police, or the public agency for children protection.



More information about help resources: **page. 24**



<sup>50</sup>. United Nations: Convention on the Rights of the Child. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

Family and educational prevention should not only focus on preventing someone from becoming a victim, but should also encourage children to reject this type of material by understanding the implications of its generation. The children and adolescents of today are tomorrow's adults, and it is essential to encourage a healthy development of their personality and sexuality, with respect and responsibility towards the others, so as to reduce the future demand for child sexual abuse material.



### For more information:

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-safety-advice-for-young-children-parents-and-carers>

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/public-awareness-and-prevention-guides/your-life-online-protect-it>

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/how-to-set-your-privacy-settings-social-media>



## 2. Preventing online child sexual abuse and exploitation

### 2.2 Guidelines for educators and other professionals



Just like any other adult who interacts with a child, members of the educational community are responsible for their safety and protection. The main objective in combating online sexual abuse should be to provide the child with appropriate digital education, and help them to develop skills that enable their self-protection.

#### Including specific transversal education.

Children and adolescents need to learn to use technology responsibly and safely. Including cybersecurity training and media literacy in curricula greatly benefits their future development. By supporting children in the development of critical thinking, they are better prepared to distinguish among information and facts, and to detect and deal with false approaches, lies, false claims, etc. It is also strongly recommended to show children how to manage problems from the first moment they make contact with the Internet and ask for help without feeling shame, or fear. The helpline, Safer Internet Centre or law enforcement agency of your country may provide resources to support you on this topic.

#### Develop awareness-raising activities.

The educational setting is an ideal learning space for awareness-raising sessions and learning activities on the problems of child sexual abuse and exploitation, and for working on ways to reduce the risks in children's digital routines, showing them ways to remain in control. Issues that can be covered include healthy sexuality and relationships, respect and values of civil coexistence, or learning to say no to unwanted, dubious or strange requests.

Children need to be aware of the possible medium and long-term consequences of participating in practices such as sexting, where they can put their private lives and privacy in other people's hands.

Respect for others is essential to prevent requests and demands for intimate content from other children. Storing or sharing intimate images or videos of a child or adolescent constitutes a crime.

#### Promote peer collaboration and support.

When a situation of abuse takes place, the first people who can suspect or find out about it are usually those closest to the child: their friends and classmates. That is why it is essential to make them see the importance of supporting the victim, listening to them and helping them to ask for adult support or professional assistance.

#### Create a support network in schools.

Establishing a mediation system in a school can be challenging. However, it can have several positive effects: it can improve coexistence and support amongst the children themselves, it can help in the early detection and resolution of conflicts, including situations related to child sexual abuse and exploitation, such as when intimate images of a child are shared amongst classmates without the child's consent. Establishing a group of mediators and informing about the specific persons in the educational team available to help with such issues, can inspire confidence in the child about the system, and therefore enable reporting of possible abuse situations.



### 3. Detecting possible cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation



#### 3.1 Warning signs in children

The Internet is one more means of communication, **what happens online can affect a child the same way** as any other event in their daily lives. The problems children face on the Internet are real ones and the consequences can be felt on a physical, emotional and social level. Furthermore, these consequences may even be amplified due to the virality and duration of online content, so as the difficulties to remove it definitely.

In many cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, the victims are unaware that it is a crime, do not identify themselves as victims, or can feel ashamed or frightened and not know what to do. Another characteristic is that **victims can tend to hide** the real situation from adults, as they do with any other problem that has something to do with their private life, social relationships or sexuality.

At the same time, you can watch out for certain warning signs that, despite not being clear markers of this type of situation, can make you suspect that all is not well with the child. If such symptoms exist, it is important to pay attention to them and think that there may be a problem of online sexual abuse or exploitation.

The **involvement of the family** in a child's learning, accompaniment and daily checking of their activity on the Internet can help parents to detect early warning signs. Maintaining a space where there is closeness, attention, trust and dialogue enables children to ask for help. Frequent conversations about their everyday online activities can enable parents to notice changes in their behaviour that might be causes for concern. These strategies can make it easier to react in time, by confirming whether a problem exists, and resolve it before it gets worse.



Warning signs to watch out for<sup>51,52</sup>:

**Changes in behaviour:** the child behaves and acts differently, is more irritable, sadder, introverted, sensitive, apathetic, they may experience psychosomatic problems, nightmares, regressions, eating or sleep disorders, etc. The child may also try to gain the parents' attention with antisocial or aggressive behaviour, breaking family rules, school regulations or limits in other daily contexts.

**Reduced academic performance:** difficulties in concentration can interfere with attention in the classroom, during homework or in exams. The child may start to miss classes on a regular basis without giving any explanation.

**Changes in their social relationships:** they may express unwillingness to participate in group activities with classmates or may suddenly decide to change their group of friends.

**Isolation:** when the child's change in social behaviour leads them to remain alone, to avoid being with persons of their age group or explore intimate relationships.

**Increased secrecy when using devices:** the child suddenly shows great interest in their privacy, does not want to share their mobile phone or computer, hides or demands to be left alone to use the device without supervision.

**Interest in inappropriate sexual content:** the child may show excessive interest in pornographic content, make false or inappropriate sexual statements, or use sexual vocabulary not used by children of their age. It is also important to pay attention to possible unsuitable behaviour that can indicate an attraction for child sexual abuse material, in order to get professional help as soon as possible. With the right skills and resources, the child will be able to adequately manage their sexual impulses, with a normal life outside the cycle of abuse.

<sup>51</sup> Red.es: Monográfico Grooming <https://www.is4k.es/de-utilidad/recursos/recursos-didacticos-redes>.

<sup>52</sup> Save the Children: Abuso sexual infantil: Manual de formación para profesionales [https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/imce/docs/manual\\_abuso\\_sexual.pdf](https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/imce/docs/manual_abuso_sexual.pdf)

### 3. Detecting possible cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation

#### 3.2 Locating child sexual abuse or exploitation materials

A common internet user, in their ordinary lawful digital activities, is not probably encountering any images or videos of child sexual abuse and exploitation. These contents are usually hidden from the public web so as to be less likely detected, reported, deleted, and their responsible persons prosecuted. Moreover, digital platforms are aware of the problem, setting strict policies and reporting procedures to deal with child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

Anyway, if a user encounters online, or receives a message with an **obvious example**, such as brief images or videos with sexual connotations where the protagonists are clearly children, or **an insinuation** about where to find this type of content, or how to contact a community or distributor, it is their responsibility to report it. Each report can make a difference to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

If the user is attempting to violate your rights or dignity with methods such as messages involving harassment, threats or attempts of blackmail, then save the original messages, and it is recommended to save screenshots in order to report them to the police.

If you find an **advert, website or images** of sexual nature with children involved, contact the police or report it to your national hotline. There are reporting channels for this sort of content that protect the informant's identity.

The mere possession of child sexual abuse material is a crime. Do not download the material and do not attach it when you make a report. Just provide the data necessary to commence the investigation, such as the website URL.

More information about types of child sexual abuse material: **page. 10**

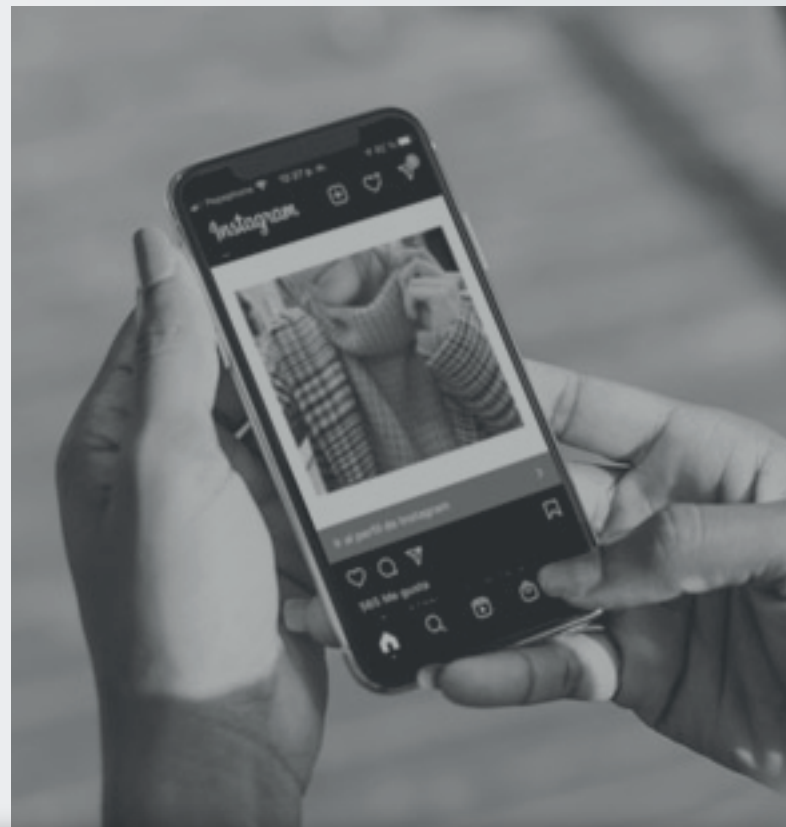
More information about help and report resources: **page. 24**

Another possible situation is receiving a **proposition for contact from an adult** with clear sexual intentions when using a social network, a videogame, or any other online platform. In such cases, it is important to consider that the sender may be trying to locate child users.

Whatever the situation may be, **the involvement of citizens is essential** in improving Internet safety. Report the profile, the content or the website, and encourage children to collaborate in taking these measures. Every report counts and can help to prevent children from suffering sexual abuse.

#### How to report:

If the **user** is on a social network, forum or videogame, report them to the platform itself, using the report options available (usually by clicking on the profile or message options, or by using the platform contact system or help service).



### 3. Detecting possible cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation

#### 3.3 Guidelines for families on how to react

In situations where you suspect that a child is a possible victim of online sexual abuse or exploitation, it is essential to know how to react to prevent further consequences, ensure their safety and resolve the situation.

##### 1. Show them unconditional support.

Talk to the victim calmly in a non-threatening context, letting them know that they are in a safe place with people that can be fully trusted, where they can freely express themselves and talk about whatever is happening to them. It is important to show self-control and understand that their situation is highly vulnerable.

*You look sad, are you OK?, can I help you?  
Whatever it is, we'll find a solution together.  
This could happen to anyone, it's not your fault.  
Would you rather talk to someone else you trust?*

##### 2. Listen to their version of events.

In this conversation, the adult's role should be to listen to and accompany the child, without judgement or pre-assumptions. Put yourself in their place, they are trying to explain an intimate, complex and painful experience. Try not to interrupt them, give them all the time they need and emphasise that it is not their fault, that what happened to them is a crime. The child may feel more comfortable talking to someone else who they trust, or may feel better telling you in the company of a friend of their age who knows about the situation.

##### 3. Collect evidences.

It is essential to report every possible case of child sexual abuse or exploitation. Therefore, it is necessary to ask the victim to provide all the details they can so that the police can investigate the abuse and locate the criminal. The original messages must be kept, being advisable to take screenshots. Although this may be unpleasant, it can be very helpful for the investigation. For safety reasons, the evidences, images and videos must be carefully stored, and no one else should have access to the material.

##### 4. Ask for professional help.

Child sexual abuse is a serious and complex problem. For this reason, it is recommended to call a professional advisory service, such as the helpline or Safer Internet Centre of your country, ask for psychological help at the health services, and report what has happened to the national Law Enforcement agency.

When the police has established that any action to withdraw material will not endanger the investigation or legal proceedings, you may contact the online platforms and services where the abuse took place (e.g., messaging tools, social networks, etc.). Report and block the user, as well as the content that should be deleted, being also possible to exercise the rights according to the General Data Protection Regulation<sup>53</sup>.

It is very important to remember that the child is never the guilty party, but rather the individual who abuses them, either directly or by sexualising their image.

**Unconditional support from their friends can be decisive in enabling children to talk about the situation and overcoming it.**

More information about help and support resources: **page. 24**



<sup>53</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/2016-05-04>

### 3. Detecting possible cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation



#### 3.4 Advice for educators and professionals

Adults who are part of the child's world can detect signs or indications that might mean that there is a possible case of online sexual abuse or exploitation. Professionals who spend a lot of time in the child's company, such as teaching staff, medical personnel or people working in the leisure and sports sectors, may find out about these situations and must be able to help the victim, providing support and ensuring that it is reported.



More information about warning signs:  
**page. 20**

How to help a child in a situation of online sexual abuse or exploitation:

**Keep the right attitude** whenever you find out about a situation of abuse. A problem of this scale cannot be ignored. It is essential to react in a specially careful and respectful way to protect the victim and their privacy, without judging or blaming. To facilitate the process to the professionals in charge, it is advisable to include this issue among the educational centre's **action plan and safeguarding protocol**, and equivalent operational procedures in children's healthcare facilities or any other service that has direct contact with children.

**Support the child and offer a safe space** that the child can trust and where they can talk about what has happened. Children and adolescents are very vulnerable in these situations, and fear can stop them from reacting. Many of them do not know that they are victims of a criminal offence and may feel ashamed or guilty. Reminding them that they have a circle of people who are there for them and that the problem can be solved may encourage them to talk about their experience and report the abuse.

**Contact specialist services** and inform the family or custodians, as long as this is not counterproductive. In complex situations such as these, it is advisable to get help from specialized professional services from the educational, the health and social services. The police or the juvenile prosecution services can also provide guidance and support in the reporting.

Each situation of online child sexual abuse and exploitation puts the child's and many other children's safety at serious risk. Reacting effectively and quickly can reduce the consequences for the child and prevent new situations of abuse.



**Call the helpline, Safer Internet Centre or law enforcement agency of your country.**



## 4. Resources of interest



### 4.1 Organisations against online child sexual abuse

**There are a lot of organisations worldwide that fight against online child sexual abuse and exploitation.**

They offer support and assistance to victims and their families. It is necessary to know these services so as any adult or child can contact them in the event of a situation of abuse, risk, or when they have doubts about this sort of problem. Although the specific procedures of each entity may differ, in generally we can distinguish among:

**Police:** the law enforcement agencies usually have specialised teams combating online child sexual abuse and exploitation that also provide help to victims.

**Safer Internet Centres:** are part of the European network for a Better Internet for Kids. They are responsible for developing awareness-raising and training programmes to protect children and adolescents on the Internet, and for operating helplines and hotlines for this issue.

**Helplines:** organisations that provide guidance and help for specific problems. They can take the form of telephone helpdesks, Internet services, or offer face-to-face assistance.

**Hotlines:** organisations that help people to report and denounce online child sexual abuse content. They also provide information that may be of use when trying to help children in situations of abuse.

**Associations of victims and other specialized organisations:** offering care, guidance and support programmes to help in a victim's recovery, developing raising awareness campaigns, etc.

**Technological initiatives:** these programmes set out to improve automatic processes to detect online child sexual abuse material, and therefore facilitate its blocking and deletion, the identification of victims who need help, and of offenders to be prosecuted and treated.



### 4.2 Finding resources of interest in your country

To find the most appropriate support or guidance service or identify the help centres in any country, consult the lists of resources at the following organisations:

**BIK (Better Internet for Kids):**

European platform whose mission is to raise citizens' awareness about children's safety online. It contains information about Safer Internet Centres, helplines and hotlines throughout the EU:

<https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/home>

**INHOPE**

International organisation that combats online child sexual abuse and offers a list of hotlines in many countries: <https://www.inhope.org/>

**ECPAT**

International organisation that defends children's rights in the fight against child sexual exploitation:

<https://www.ecpat.org/what-we-do/report-child-exploitation/>

**EUROPOL**

The police agency of the European Union provides support to national police authorities in the fight against cross-border, especially complex and serious crimes, such as child sexual exploitation:

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/child-sexual-exploitation>

Awareness raising campaign 'Say No!':

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/sayno>

'TraceAnObject' initiative: seeking the citizens' collaboration to provide information about the possible origin of everyday objects placed in images of child sexual abuse:

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse>

**HelpLinks.eu**

A list of services around the world, that are independent of the police, to help persons who have a sexual interest in children: <http://helplinks.eu>

## 4. Resources of interest

### 4.3 Resources of interest in Spain

National Cybersecurity Institute, INCIBE:  
[www.incibe.es](http://www.incibe.es)

INCIBE Cybersecurity helpline ☎ 017  
[www.incibe.es/linea-de-ayuda-en-ciberseguridad](http://www.incibe.es/linea-de-ayuda-en-ciberseguridad)

Safer Internet Centre, 'Internet Segura for Kids'  
[www.is4k.es](http://www.is4k.es)

Hotline 'CASI'  
[www.is4k.es/denuncia-casi](http://www.is4k.es/denuncia-casi)

Guardia Civil (Law enforcement) ☎ 062  
[www.guardiacivil.es](http://www.guardiacivil.es)

National Police Force ☎ 091  
[www.policia.es](http://www.policia.es)

Juvenile prosecution service:  
[www.fiscal.es/web/fiscal/-/menores](http://www.fiscal.es/web/fiscal/-/menores)

Spanish Data Protection Agency, priority channel for requesting the removal of sexual or violent content:  
[www.aepd.es/canalprioritario](http://www.aepd.es/canalprioritario)

Federation of Associations for the Prevention of Child Mistreatment in Spain (FAPMI)  
[www.fapmi.es](http://www.fapmi.es)

ANAR Foundation (Help to Children and Adolescents at Risk) ☎ 900202010  
[www.anar.org](http://www.anar.org)

Pantallas Amigas  
[www.pantallasamigas.net](http://www.pantallasamigas.net)

### 4.4 Resources of interest in Portugal

Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV)  
<https://apav.pt>

Safer Internet Centre, 'Centro Internet Segura'  
[www.internetsegura.pt](http://www.internetsegura.pt)

### 4.5 Resources of interest in Malta

Malta Police Force  
<https://pulizija.gov.mt/>

BeSmartOnline!  
[www.besmartonline.org.mt](http://www.besmartonline.org.mt)



# # CHILD ABUSE

For more information, go to  
[www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse](http://www.incibe.es/en/stop-child-abuse)