NSPCC

The State of Children's Rights 2020

Sexual exploitation and abuse

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Aims of discussion:

1. To reflect on issues relating to sexual exploitation and abuse i.e. progress, emerging issues and/or action required.

2. To help shape Together's report to the UN Committee 2020 highlighting key children's rights concerns to inform 'Concluding Observations'.

NSPCC: what we do

Our goals

- Preventing child abuse in families facing adversity

- Prevent child sexual abuse

- Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse

- Help children who've experienced abuse get back on track

- Make children safe on-line

How do we do this?

- Campaigning for policy and legislative change

- Providing universal (Childline) and targeted (GIFT) services

- Providing parents, teachers and children with resources (O2, All of Us)

- Ground-breaking research (evaluation and policy)

Services

- Respect and Protect

- Letting the Future In

- HSB Framework tool

UNCRC Concluding Observations

Reporting and awareness: UNCRC Concluding Observation: Systematically collect and publish comprehensive and disaggregated data on child exploitation and abuse, including through mandatory reporting in all settings.

Online technologies; UNCRC Concluding Observation: Develop and implement comprehensive multi-sectoral strategies on child exploitation and abuse, including online, to ensure effective prevention, early detection and intervention.

Support services, detection and prosecution: UNCRC Concluding Observation Further develop comprehensive services to support children who are victims or at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement, and grant effective remedies to the child victims.

Reporting and awareness

The Scottish Government has committed to improve its understanding of the scale and nature of CSE through data collection, and by developing indicators to monitor progress.

The 2019 report recommended that the Scottish Government should:

- Ensure disaggregated data on child exploitation and abuse is published;
- Develop robust, child rights-based indicators to monitor progress in implementing the National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle CSA&E.

Key activity to date:

- Expert Group on preventing sexual offending involving children (2020)
- Children's Rights Action Plan (2018-21)
- National CSE action plan the National CSE Group to oversee implementation
- Development of Scottish standards for Barnahus
- The Chief Medical Officer's Taskforce and a national clinical pathway for children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse.
- Increased use of pre-recorded evidence in advance of criminal trials.

The impact of COVID on CSEO

A Global Alliance intelligence brief (May 2020) found that it is highly probable that numbers of OCSE cases will increase during COVID-19 restrictions.

● Greater unsupervised internet use means children are exposed to greater risk of CSEO, including sexual coercion, extortion and manipulation; Exchange of self-generated material likely to increase, as children are now experiencing most of their social lives only online.

● The increase in the numbers of emotionally vulnerable children poses greater risk for increased grooming by offenders.

● Isolation due to COVID-19 is likely to increase the probability of offenders acting on their impulses.

● COVID-19 restrictions are disrupting reporting services, with current systems still reliant on human moderation.

● The current focus within Govt/Law on the impact COVID-19 are leading to lower prioritisation of OCSE in many jurisdictions.

NSPCC

Parity of protection: keeping children safe online and offline

Childhood is a time to explore, play, and learn. During these formative years, children deserve to be safe, wherever they go. That's why the offline world has so many measures in place to protect them. But the same cannot be said for online. Think about this: the internet is like a playground to children – but is it a safe space?

Setting up the space

Manufacturers prioritise safety when they design things like swings. Standards and regulations mean they can be held to account for any injuries caused during play – a strong motivator for safe equipment.

Separating the space

There just aren't many barriers where there should be. When we spoke to over 1,000 young people, we found that over half had been exposed to online pornography.[1]

Supervising the space

Many activity groups, like Scouts and Girl Guides, are well supervised. Group leaders have to carry out criminal record checks, and must uphold a responsibility to prevent and address issues like bullying.

Setting up the space

Some websites and apps are designed with safety features, but many popular ones could do more. When we asked children, 60 per cent said social media sites need to do more to protect them from violent content.[2]

Separating the space

The law means that most playgrounds have a fence separating children from dangers like dogs and traffic. This allows children to freely explore the space, and reassures parents that the area is safe.

UPDATE MY STATUS

Supervising the space

While many websites do have moderators, we don't know how effective their training is to help spot things like cyber bullying. But more and more children are talking to us about this – up 88 per cent in the last five years.[3]

Children deserve the same protections online and offline, so that they can grow up safely. In the offline world there are standards of protection, many legally binding. This is simply not the case online. That's why we're calling for parity of protection for children, to keep them safe in the offline and online world.

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[1] Middlesex University (2016) Research with 11-16 year-olds commissioned by the NSPCC and the Children's Commissioner
[2] NSPCC Net Aware research (unpublished)
[3] NSPCC (2016) What children are telling us about bullying

CSE: How does abuse happen online?

Many cases of grooming will have some online aspect to it.

NSPCC considers online grooming to occur in 3 ways:
- Grooming by an unknown adult
- Grooming by a known adult
- Peer-to-peer grooming

Same vulnerabilities online as offline:
- Mental health difficulties
- Lack of adequate supervision
- Looked after children

Device rich, time poor families
Children are developmentally programmed to take risks

Covid-19 – a perfect storm…

- Risky or unsafe design features
- Children online while more anxious and lonelier
- Moderation gaps
- Intersection with offender behaviour in lockdown

NSPCC Scotland found there were 5,325 recorded offences including rape, grooming and sexual assault against children in 2018-19.

It comes three years after NSPCC **research** found access to recovery services was "patchy and fragmented"

>Demand increasing
>Support decreasing

The Right to Recover (2017)

Therapeutic services for children and young people following sexual abuse

The right of every child to access help to aid their physical, psychological and emotional recovery following abuse is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and supported by the Scottish Government's Children and Young People's Act.

NSPCC Scotland research found:

- Lack of therapeutic recovery services for under 18s experiencing sexual abuse.
- Existing specialist services for children are increasingly provided by the 3rd sector, insecure and struggle to meet demand.
- The state of provision has not improved in more than ten years, despite growing awareness and the strength of policy rhetoric.

What needs to change?

- The consequences of CSE can be devastating and life long.

- Cultural/technological change is fast-paced, recommendations to Govt must keep pace with the changing nature of CSE.

- COVID compounds the challenges, need to disaggregate data e.g. age, gender, socioeconomic status to identify intersectional discrimination.

- The true extent of the pandemic is yet to be seen but there is an opportunity to improve strategic response to CSE.

- Research and preventative policy around CSA/CSE but ambition never been matched with resources.

- To ensure rights can be realised, Scot Govt must place a higher priority on child sexual abuse in national budget setting and service planning.

- The level of investment must reflect the weight of evidence identifying spending on prevention and recovery services as the key to reducing poor mental health and trauma outcomes across the life course.

Consider the following questions:

(a) What are the major human rights concerns relating to CSE?

(b) Are there any new developments or issues that have arisen since Together's 2019 report, or anything that is missing?

(c) What needs to happen to ensure children's rights are protected, respected and fulfilled?

(d) From your discussion, what are the top three issues that Together should include in its report to the UN Committee? Why have you chosen these?

Thank you