



Statement on CEOP threat assessment

July 2nd, 2013

Statement from Donald Findlater, Director of Research and Development, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation

“Today we see published the Threat Assessment from CEOP, with supportive statements from Damian Green, Minister of State for Police and Criminal Justice. The threat assessment itself achieved prominence in the news, its content clearly assisting tabloids with sensationalist headlines. Let us all be appalled. But let's celebrate the success of CEOP and a few police forces. Success in what? In analysing the problem? In telling us how bad it is? In helping parents worry more?

“It may be that the ‘threat assessment’ included what is being done and planned to combat the problem so graphically described - as a member of the public I see only the headlines released and not the ‘Threat Assessment’ itself. Certainly the press statement issued appealed to all of us to ‘share responsibility’ and to take a zero tolerance position.

“Then what? Less than a month ago the same Chief Executive, Peter Davies, candidly acknowledged that the police are not able to arrest more than a fraction of those currently known to be in possession of or distributing child pornography. What has changed in the four weeks since that refreshing candour? And what leads Damian Green to be so celebratory - there is no public reassurance here. In fact it is rather difficult to see a plan for ‘what we are going to do about it’, except, of course, publish another threat assessment in twelve months’ time telling us how much worse it has got.

“It is time for the pretence to be over. If we are ever to properly combat the use of the Internet as a means for distributing child abuse material (which also gives individuals across the globe the motivation to abuse children in the first place), this needs to be a battle we are all involved in. But we then need to know what to do, in order to play our part. Clearly reporting to the over stretched police is not necessarily the best option; as such reports will presumably only join a long queue or displace another report or investigation.

“From long years working in this field, it is clear to me that a significant proportion of people in the UK in possession of indecent images of children had a first time. They were not committed to viewing such images, but were a heavy user of adult pornography and followed links that were there for them to follow. Not the technical sophistication of the ‘Dark Web’. Far more insidious than this in the ease with which images are found by so many. Then it follows that it should be easy to stop them finding such material in the first place, with the Internet industry being tasked with a specific action in this area. If we stop people finding these images in the first place, then they haven't broken the law and CEOP and police colleagues can get on with the more committed and sophisticated offenders, as well as the organised aspects of this appalling situation.

“Of course most images are consumed in the home, mostly by people who are not hermits. Others are well placed to notice concerning, secretive, guilt-laden behaviour by teenagers as well as adult men, in the most part. While we are busy reading CEOP reports about Dark Web and organised gangs and live streaming of abuse, are we also thinking ‘is my son/ husband/ father interested in viewing sexual images of those under 18 years?’ What is the conversation that finds out?

“On the Stop it Now! Helpline we hear from these sons, husbands and fathers, mostly after the police have visited and technology has been seized. We also hear from their distraught family members, struggling to understand, to accept that a loved one had been interested in viewing this material. Everyone wishes they were not having to deal with the grim reality of possession of such material. And we could make sure most of them didn't have to, if only we'd bother to make the effort.

“How? For many, the first ‘encounter’ happens in a sexually aroused state whilst looking at adult, legal pornography. So warn such viewers not to stray, not to follow links to ‘barely legal’ to ‘teen sex’ sites. Make sure parents engage with their children about not just staying safe online, but staying legal. Most 15 year olds don't know the exchanging pictures of their ‘bits’ is illegal, so why would they avoid teen sex sites? Their parents don't know the law either and sadly many teachers and youth workers don't.

“It's all very well hearing from CEOP of the threats but we need to hear reassurance of how they are preventing harm to our children, preventing things from getting worse and we need to hear from Government about what all of us - parents, schools, family members, industry can do to play their necessary part. It must, however, be practical. Someone needs to have a plan. I hope the Home Office National Group delivers such a plan. We need more than a place that talks and that feeds tomorrow's headlines.”

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Notes to editors:

For more information and/or interview opportunities please contact Deborah Denis on ddenis@stopitnow.org.uk | 01372 847160 | 07540 690 315

1. About the Lucy Faithfull Foundation

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation celebrated 20 years of protecting children from sexual harm in 2012. Named after its founder, Baroness Lucy Faithfull of Wolvercote, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to reducing the risk of children being sexually abused. It works with entire families that have been affected by abuse including: adult male and female sexual abusers; young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members. Drawing on expert knowledge about child sexual abuse the charity offers a broad range of services for professionals and members of the public. These include: assessments, intervention and treatment of known offenders, case specific advice and support, training and development courses and workshops, educational programmes for internet offenders and their families, circles of support and accountability, internet safety seminars for schools (teachers, parents

and children) and Parents Protect! training for professionals, parents, carers and other adults. www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk. It also runs the Stop it Now! Campaign and Helpline (0808 1000 900) www.stopitnow.org.uk and www.parentsprotect.co.uk

2. About Stop it Now!

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland is a national campaign and Freephone confidential Helpline. It aims to prevent child sexual abuse by increasing public awareness and empowering people to act responsibly to protect children. Stop it Now! believes that it is the responsibility of all adults to take positive action to prevent the sexual abuse of children. Stop it Now! is an alliance of leading children's charities including the NSPCC, Action for Children, Children England and The National Association of People Abused in Childhood, working with the government and child protection agencies, to promote public education and prevent child sexual abuse. The Stop it Now! helpline has been operating since 2002 and aims to prevent child abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children safely. The helpline is funded by the Ministry of Justice and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. www.stopitnow.org.uk