

## New Technologies, New Victims: Internet Offending

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The internet offending landscape remains unclear with limited research in this area. This Information Sheet aims to outline some of the current challenges in this area. New technologies refer to websites, social media, apps and devices, such as smart phones. Some young people's actions online result in them becoming involved in offending behaviour, or finding themselves vulnerable to the behaviours of others.

### NSPCC/ChildLine's experience

NSPCC/ChildLine have reported a 65% increase in contact from young people, adults and professionals regarding new technologies. Contacts recorded include a **168%** increase in reports of online sexual abuse. Of those young people who have contacted NSPCC their experiences include:

**12%** cyber-stalking

**12%** unwanted sexual messages

**8%** asked to send or respond to a sexual message

### Non-contact offending behaviour

The Sexual Offences (S) Act 2009 defines this as the making, taking or distributing of indecent images of children using digital technologies (in law, having illegal material on a computer or device or obtaining illegal material onto a computer or device, not producing it yourself).

Involvement in non-contact offences can be due to vulnerability through learning needs (Quayle et al 2015) including autistic spectrum disorder, exploration of sexual identity and orientation or as part of a grooming process. Online pornography addictions are increasingly common in young men; accessing adult pornography online and their behaviour then becoming unregulated (Henry 2013, Wilson 2014).

### Contact and non-contact offending behaviour

Some people may view images before going on to commit contact offences, whereas others may not commit contact offences at all. Others may be in possession of illegal images for financial gain only, selling images as a "business" (CEOP 2012).

Long et al (2011) studied 30 dual (contact and non-contact) and 30 non-contact adult offenders. Although concluding from a small sample, they suggest differences exist between the two groups, with contact offenders mainly possessing higher level images on the COPINE scale. Long (2011) suggests those with prior convictions for contact offences and also committing non-contact offences were more likely to have access to children and more likely to be opportunistic.

In the most recent met-analysis, less than 5% of online offenders recidivated during the follow up period, which was up to six months (Seto et al 2011).

## Victims

One means of supporting young people to manage pressure and expectations online is [ZIPIT, an app developed in association with young people by ChildLine](#), which prevents some young people becoming victims of online abuse.

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