

GIVE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS A VOICE

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

REPORT 



WITH A FEW CLICKS YOU CAN MAKE
A DIFFERENCE. IF YOU EVER STUMBLE
ACROSS SEXUAL IMAGES/VIDEOS
OF UNDER 18s ONLINE, YOU CAN
REPORT THESE ANONYMOUSLY AND
CONFIDENTIALLY. WE DON'T NEED
YOUR DETAILS, JUST YOUR HELP!

Make A Report

www

Via our online
report form

[www.hotline.ie/
contact-us/report](http://www.hotline.ie/contact-us/report)



Via email

info@hotline.ie



Our work would not be possible without the incredible partnerships we have formed, the support and ongoing collaboration between public sector, law enforcement, Internet companies operating in/from Ireland, and last but not least the public's readiness to report suspected illegal online content.

The Hotline.ie Team would like to express our sincere heartfelt gratitude to everyone for the role they have played in helping us make a difference in the lives of countless children in Ireland and abroad, whether it was by raising awareness, reporting suspect images of children to Hotline.ie, funding the Hotline.ie service, working with us to have identified child sexual abuse images/videos removed from the Internet and evidence preserved for law enforcement investigations or collaborating on enhancing our systems.

We are also very grateful to the Irish Government for their long-standing support of the work of Hotline.ie, demonstrating a commitment to making Ireland a safer place for all children to grow and thrive, and furthermore to the global efforts to eradicate the online sexual exploitation of children.

Looking ahead, we are committed as ever to further develop strategies, partnerships and leverage state of the art technology for the purpose of combating the availability and proliferation of child sexual abuse online, disrupting the cycle of child sexual exploitation, preventing repeat-victimisation of children and ensuring that Ireland remains one of the most hostile countries in the world to host online child sexual abuse imagery.

Thank you





FOREWORD MINISTER FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY

I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute the foreword to this Hotline.ie Annual Report, in this their twentieth anniversary year.

In 2018, Hotline.ie completed another year of its commendable work in this difficult and troubling area. I am very grateful to the staff of Hotline.ie and to the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland for their continuing endeavours. I note from the report that there was a significant rise in 2018, compared to the previous year, in the number of reports being received and dealt with by Hotline.ie, continuing the considerable increase seen in 2017. On the one hand, this reflects an increase over time in public engagement with the service, but on the other hand, it potentially demonstrates a greater level of illegal online child sexual abuse material. This illegal material is an abomination and must be combated on all fronts. Hotline.ie plays its part in this ongoing fight and I applaud their diligence.

There is a fundamental need for collaborative approaches if we are to be effective in our responses to complex problems and this is particularly true in the regulation of cyberspace.



We are focused on achievable actions with the greatest impact on online safety for everyone in Ireland.

My own Department, along with all other relevant Government Departments, is working hard to implement the actions contained in the Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-2019. We are focused on achievable actions with the greatest impact on online safety for everyone in Ireland. And An Garda Síochána, with the benefit of unprecedented Government funding, is playing its part and actively developing its capacity through expansion of its Cyber Crime Bureau. The ongoing work of Hotline.ie is also a crucial part of this combined effort.

As the online world increases in complexity and utility to our society, to our education system and indeed to our way of being in the world - and as we all become ever more reliant on it - the lurking undertones of illegal content must not be permitted to pollute this valuable resource.

I look forward to continued good cooperation with Hotline.ie as it carries out its important work.

**Charlie Flanagan, T.D.,
Minister for Justice & Equality**





WELCOME BY ISPAI PRESIDENT

On behalf of the board of the ISPAI and membership I would like to welcome you to our 2018 Hotline.ie Annual Report. This resource provides the latest statistics and findings in respect of child sexual abuse imagery (CSAI) reports received and processed by Hotline.ie throughout 2018.

Hotline.ie identifies and removes online images and videos of child sexual abuse on the back of anonymous reports from the Irish public.

2018 was a significant milestone for the organisation as we work towards our ambition to eliminate child sexual abuse imagery from the Internet. Hotline.ie received and processed over 12,000 public reports of suspected illegal content online, the highest number of reports received in an year to date. From these reports over 1,400 were confirmed and classified as child pornography and these are now with international law enforcement for investigation. I would like to thank the public for their ongoing vigilance and readiness to report suspect online content to Hotline.ie.

These results were achieved against the background of content assessment becoming increasingly complex, as offenders are becoming more technically adept at hiding CSAI. Increased convergence means that illegal online content is not confined to one digital medium but distributed and accessible across multiple ones and in many cases spread across different jurisdictions too.

I would like to pay special tribute to the Hotline.ie team. The board and members of the ISPAI owe them a special gratitude for their tireless work to curb the availability of CSAI and prevent repeat victimisations of children who have suffered from sexual abuse.

The challenge of eliminating child sexual abuse online is a vast one. It's important that all Industry and relevant stakeholders join our collective effort. I would also like to recognise the recent efforts by Government to advance the commitments set out in the National Action Plan on Online Safety particularly around tackling illegal online content.

Our mission is the elimination of child sexual abuse imagery from the Internet, and for 20 years we've done this as a self-regulatory body in partnership with Industry, Government, law enforcement and the Irish public. We are proud of our achievements during this time and I encourage Irish-based service and content providers to join forces in supporting the vital work of Hotline.ie service.

I hope you find the ISPAI Hotline.ie Annual Report to be an informative read and we look forward to reporting further progress next year.

Jill Johnston
President of the ISPAI Board of Directors



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& EQUALITY

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What We Do

Hotline.ie's role is to provide a free, secure and anonymous national Hotline Reporting Service where the public can report suspected illegal content online.

Hotline.ie's mandate is to protect children from online sexual exploitation by:

- Receiving and analysing reports from the public about potentially illegal material, as well as activities relating to the sexual exploitation of children online;
- Assessing each report in accordance with rigorous standards by reference to Irish criminal law, and referring all relevant leads to law enforcement for investigation;
- Working with Internet Industry partners to have identified child sexual abuse images/videos removed from the Internet by facilitating the "Notice and Takedown" mechanism;
- Working internationally in conjunction with over 46 other Internet Hotlines in 41 countries worldwide, united under the INHOPE umbrella association, and INTERPOL.

Hotline.ie works to:

- Have every confirmed child sexual abuse image/video removed from the Internet irrespective of where in the world it may be hosted;
- Assist law enforcement in their efforts to identify and rescue child victims from sexual abuse and have offenders brought to justice, by sifting through thousands of public reports and hundreds of thousands of images and videos to identify quality leads;
- Make the Internet a safer place for all by reducing the availability and proliferation of child sexual abuse imagery and disrupting the cycle of online child sexual exploitation.

Hotline.ie only deals with reports referring to suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet; urgent situations where persons may be in immediate danger should always be reported directly to An Garda Síochána.

Hotline.ie handles reports regarding

Child pornography

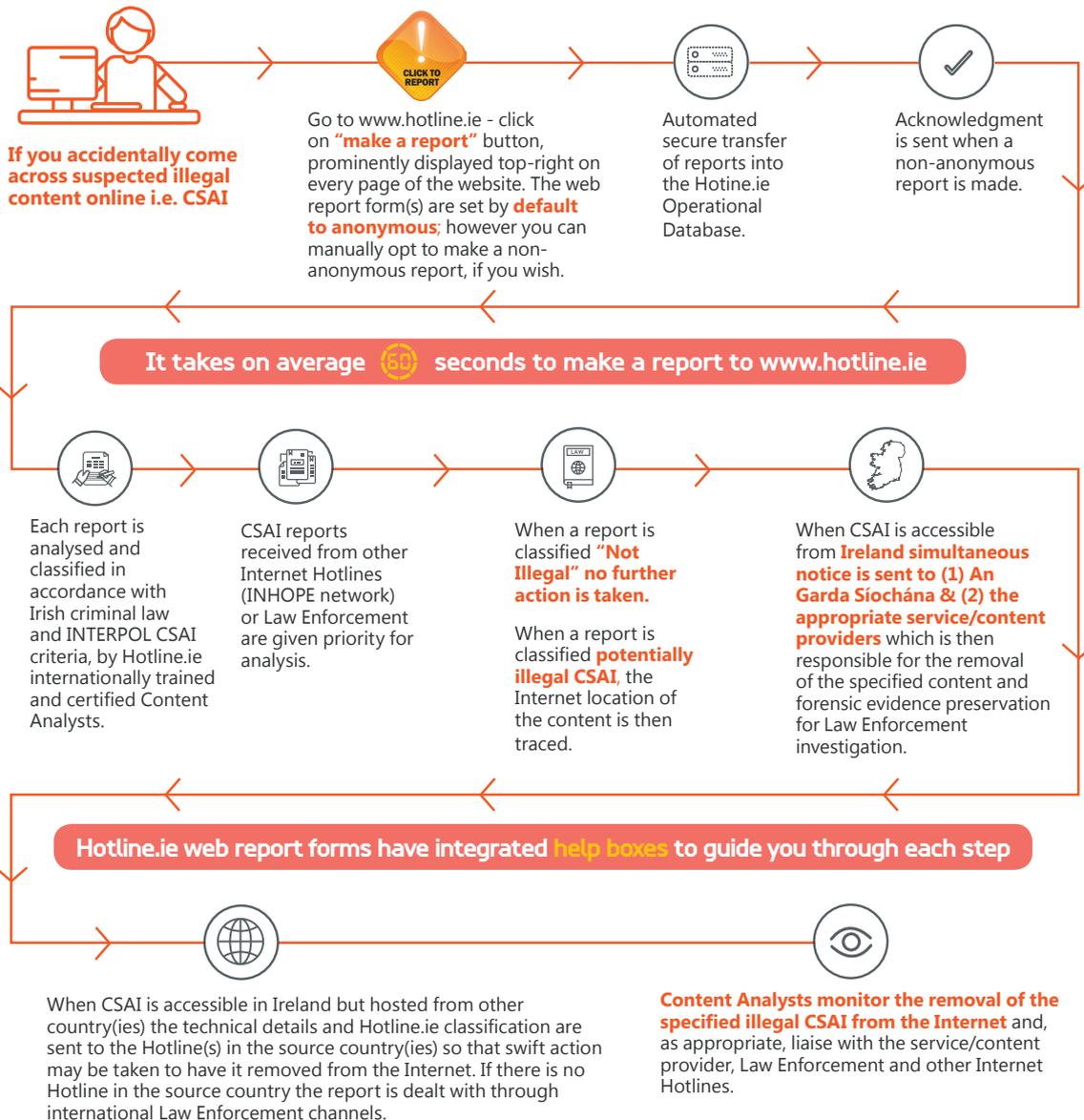
Activities relating to the sexual exploitation of children i.e. child grooming

Child sex tourism and child trafficking

Racism & xenophobia

Financial scams (which purport to be Irish financial services or have originated in Ireland)

How To Make a Report And What Happens Next



It's Not "Child Porn" or "Kiddy Porn" or "Hot Teens"

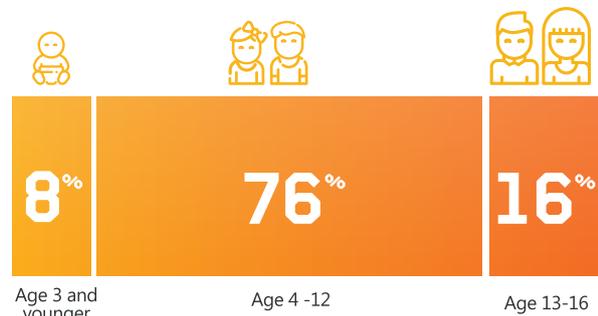
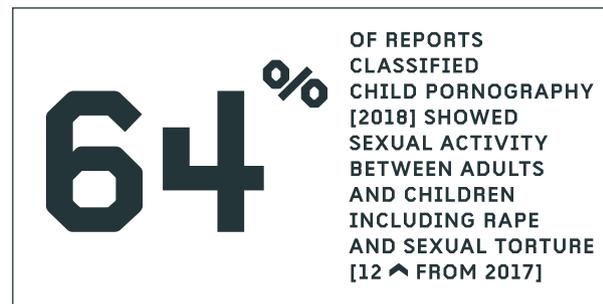
In Ireland, the sexual abuse, sexual coercion and sexual exploitation of children are offences under the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 [as amended by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] and often referred to by their legal definition "child pornography".

Child pornography is documented evidence of a crime being committed, a child being sexually exploited and often actually raped. It primarily involves real children; it is deliberate and rarely accidental. The image/video of this crime, especially if uploaded to the Internet becomes a permanent record of the child's abuse and suffering and can propagate ad infinitum.

The Irish definition of child pornography includes any visual or audio representation – be it an image, audio recording, a video, a drawing, pseudo-photographs where the computer-generated image is almost indistinguishable from that of a real living child, or written material i.e. story about the sexual assault of a child.

This makes it one of the most comprehensive definitions in the world and Hotline.ie actions all information that would potentially constitute child pornography under Irish law and notifies each confirmed case to An Garda Síochána.

In recognition that the legal term child pornography may be conveying conflicting messages to the wider public we will only use it, hereinafter, when it refers to Irish law offences and Analyst classifications based on Irish law.



“ Understandably, the concept of a child being sexually assaulted, abused and exploited can be deeply distressing. As an Analyst I witness awful evidence of this crime against children every day. Some of the content can be as severe as showing the extreme sexual abuse of a defenceless two year old infant and can deeply affect even the toughest individual. Working as an Analyst, you have to build a wall of resilience to cope with the severity of the content you are assessing. Even so, from my own experience, what may seem to be a small detail at first can cause this wall to crack. Recognising a familiar toy, clothing item, or even bed sheets in an image or video reminds me that the victim could easily be a son, daughter, brother, sister, niece, or nephew of my own, or of somebody I know. They are real children and their suffering is real too.

Not only is the child victimized when they are subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, but with each repeat viewing and showing of the content online they are re-victimized. While witnessing the suffering of every child is the most challenging part of the job, knowing that I'm making a difference in the lives of countless real children worldwide is the most rewarding aspect of my work as a Hotline.ie Analyst. I know that I cannot personally stop the abuse or the suffering of the child; nevertheless, working to have the imagery removed from the Internet is one less reminder of abuse, one less instance of re-victimization, and one step to help survivors of child sexual abuse move on from their experiences.

I would like to personally thank all of those who have made a report to Hotline.ie. I truly believe that the work we carry out makes a real difference to children globally, and each report we receive contributes to that work.

While I would hope you never come across child sexual abuse images, I would strongly urge each one of you to continue to be vigilant and to report suspect images / videos of children. The more reports we receive, the more child sexual abuse imagery may be removed from the Internet and the higher the chance of helping a child who suffers in silence, often out of fear, often because they are too young to even speak. ”

Eoin
Hotline.ie Analyst

Child Pornography it's a Crime

To accurately convey the gravity and very nature of the material as well as challenge any notion that such acts may be carried out pursuant to the consent of the child, the term "child sexual abuse imagery" (CSAI) will be used to describe the illegal images/videos depicting child sexual abuse.

Contrarily, terms such as "child porn" or "kiddy porn" or other similar variations referencing children or very young age and terminology used in legal adult pornography (i.e. "hot", "sexy", "hardcore") for example "hot teens" are, on one hand, attempts to normalise the consumption of child sexual abuse imagery; and on the other, particularly when used by mainstream media outlets, may unfortunately desensitize the public to the physical and psychological harm suffered by minimising the crime or giving the impression that the child being sexually abused is complicit in the abuse. Words matter.



It's a crime to

invite or coerce a child to engage in /or observe sexually explicit acts



It's a crime to

control or direct the activities of a child for the purpose of child prostitution



It's a crime to

encourage, advocate or counsel any sexual activity with a child



It's a crime to

knowingly access child pornography



It's a crime to

produce or facilitate the production of child pornography



It's a crime to

possess, distribute, transmit, advertise or sell child pornography

Hotline.ie Call to Action

1 CHILD

robbed of his/her innocence, raped, sexually exploited and re-victimised through the recording, repeat sharing and viewing of the abuse online is **1 too many**

Hotline.ie Vision

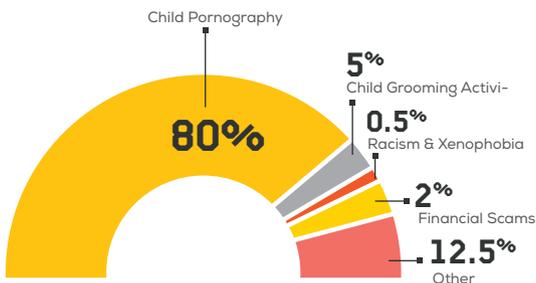
Eradicate child sexual abuse material from the Internet

A Hotline.ie Report

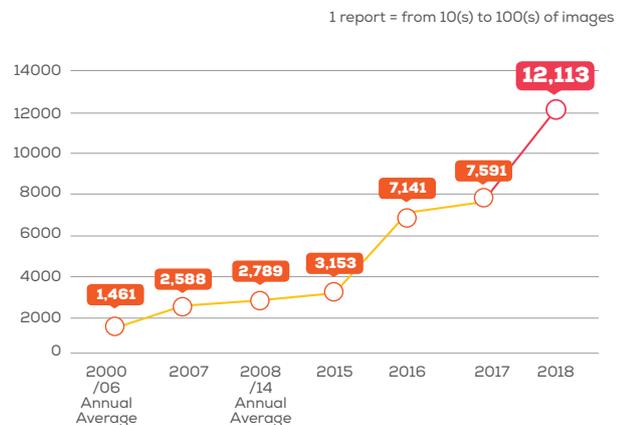
A "report" means a "single" publicly-sourced reference of suspected illegal online content received by Hotline.ie that falls within its remit. In most cases this "single" reference contains and/or leads to tens, hundreds or even thousands of images, videos, or hyperlinks to other webpages.

Usually, when a report is made to Hotline.ie there is a specific reason given or implied by the reporter - suspicion. The Hotline.ie system assigns by default "Other" label to "undeclared suspicion" reports. The information provided by the reporter is not altered in any way. Subsequently to report processing and content assessment the Analyst will assign a classification which can either confirm or differ from the reporter's suspicion, without changing the reporter's.

Suspicion Quoted By The Reporter



Annual Volume Of Reports & Evolution 2000-2018



January to December 2018, Hotline.ie has broken new records in the sheer volume of reports received, processed and investigated with a marked increase of 60% from the previous highest year on record [2017]. For the first time in 20 years, Hotline.ie received over 10,000 publicly sourced reports in a year which is a 334% increase from the annual average 2000-2017 [2,790].

Online child sexual abuse is not a new and distinct form of sexual abuse but rather a manifestation facilitated by the availability and fast paced technological change enabling the images/material to be, for example:

- stored, distributed and accessible widely to large audiences around the world, in a way that appears private and anonymous;
- captured and recorded with high-quality, portable and Internet connected devices i.e. cameras, smartphones, webcams;
- altered easily and swiftly with software programmes;
- live-streamed (as the sexual abuse is taking place);
- created virtually;
- available to those who have not (or have not yet) committed a contact sexual offence against a child;
- used as networking or trading among offenders communities;
- used commercially for financial gain.

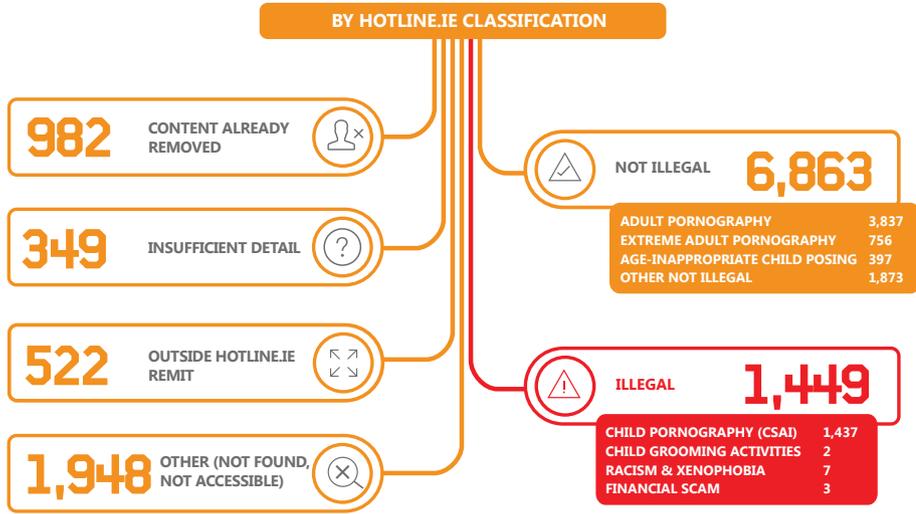
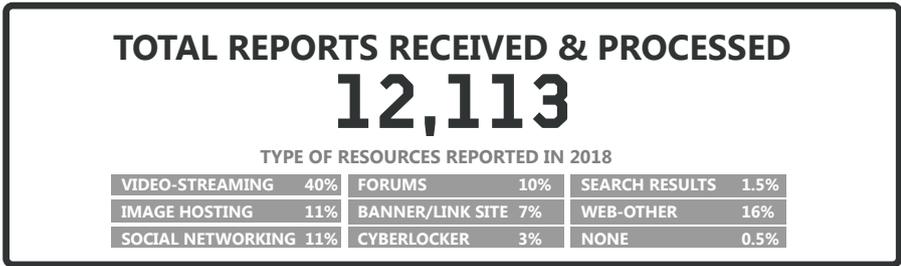
The sheer volume of reports received in 2018 is further evidence that uninterrupted Hotline.ie service is an imperative.

The existence of child sexual abuse imagery does not only have a life-lasting impact on the child victims within the imagery but it also assists in creating demand and a market for this type of content, which further negatively impacts societal beliefs and attitudes towards children by showcasing them as sexual objects.

Removing CSAI from the Internet is the first step in the process, while working in conjunction with law enforcement is also of utmost importance in ensuring the child victims do not remain voiceless and “faceless” and equally that offenders can ultimately be identified and prosecuted.

Hotline.ie plays a unique and critical role in assessing and triaging public reports, where Analysts sift through thousands of reports to identify quality leads thereby reducing the burden that would otherwise be placed on law enforcement agencies (i.e. assessing complaints that may not prove to reside in the jurisdiction or do not relate to potentially criminal content) and subsequently forwarded to law enforcement; the INHOPE network and in the case where CSAI was hosted from Ireland [1.6%] notices were also sent to the electronic service provider in question.

Breakdown of Reports Received & Processed in 2018



When an Analyst uncovers obvious references/links suggesting further CSAI at different locations, while processing a public report, the Analyst will follow the said instructions and examine the content. When potentially criminal content is displayed, the Analyst will create a report for each additional unique location, which we refer to as a “Derived Report”.

Insufficient Detail classification means the reporter did not provide sufficient information for the Analyst to work out: (1) the Internet location at which the suspected illegal content may be accessed; or (2) what is being reported as suspected illegal content. For example, a report would be classified as Insufficient Detail if:

- no URL [link] provided, only description of the content or concern;
- the content is password protected or premium account is required to gain access, and the reporter has not provided the necessary;
- a forum [i.e. multiple threads, each containing tens to hundreds of postings inclusive of links to third parties] without description of the content or how/where to locate it within;
- search results displaying tens to hundreds of images and/or videos, without any further description of content/suspicion.

In 2018, 2% of the reports quoting child pornography as a suspicion did not include sufficient information to allow Hotline.ie Analysts to identify where/how to access the content being reported.

Content Already Removed is recorded by Analysts when there is a clear message displayed at the reported location, stating the content had been removed. This can happen, for example, if:

- the content owner no longer wishes to make it available;
- the content could have also been referred to another Hotline (in the INHOPE network) and had already been actioned.
- breach of Internet content/service provider Terms & Conditions.

Hence, Hotline.ie has no way of knowing beyond reasonable doubt whether the removed content would have been contrary to Irish law or not.

Reports on issues of content ownership, copyright infringement, sale of drugs, spyware allegations, sale of documents or personal data, trade of endangered species, money-laundering allegations, etc. are **Outside Hotline.ie Remit** and would be classified as such.



CSAI: 2018 Hotline.ie Findings

Determining the extent of CSAI on the Internet is difficult, as it is impossible to verify the number of websites and all the other platforms and communication mediums that distribute this type of content.

The fact that these web-based mediums do not always remain online, or at the same location for long periods of time, and that offenders are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their attempts to evade detection, further complicates estimates.

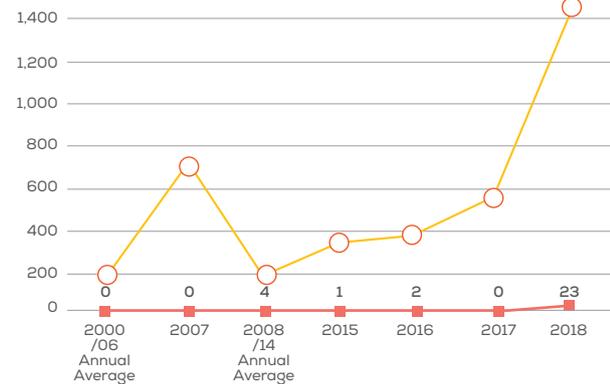
This report is limited to the information received and analysed by Hotline.ie, therefore the sample size may, in some instances, come across as small, however it is consistent with international reporting and findings..

Hotline.ie Analysts only review and assess material that is submitted by the public or uncovered in the course of analysing a public report. Hotline.ie is not currently mandated by the Irish Government to actively search out CSAI on the Internet.

In 2018, Hotline.ie Analysts classified 1,437 reports as constituting child pornography – under the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 [amended by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] – a marked increase of 174% from 2017, and 419% benchmarked against the annual average 2000-2017 [277 CSAI reports].

Unfortunately no country in the world is immune to online child sexual exploitation, and while in 2017 (for the first time in 8 years) there was no CSAI report found to be hosted from Ireland, by either Hotline.ie or other INHOPE network Hotline; in 2018, 1.6% of the child pornography reports appeared to be from Ireland. (see more page 27)

**Annual Volume Of Reports Classified
Child Pornography & Evolution 2000-2018**



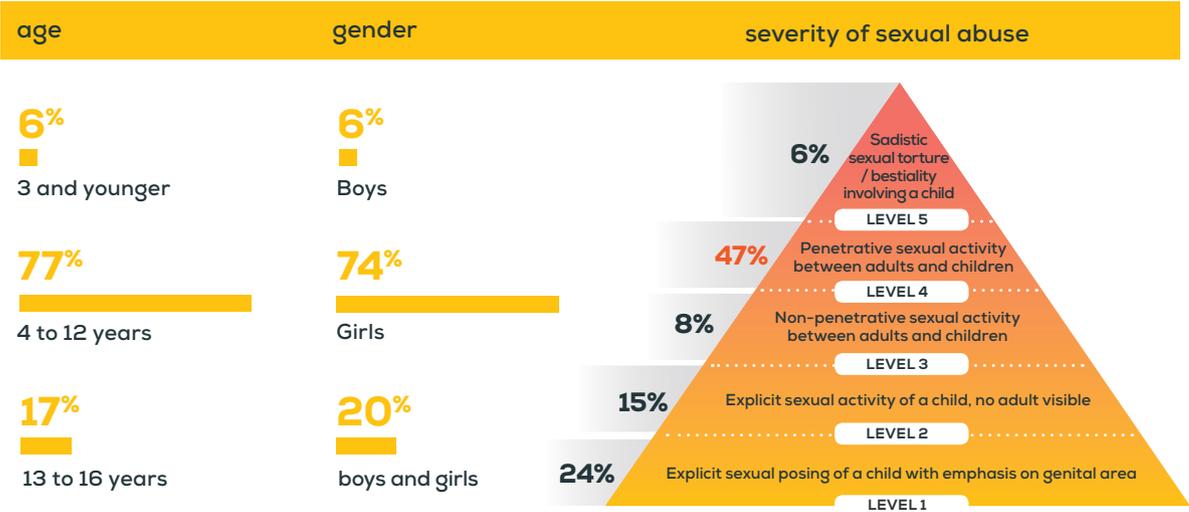
1 report = from 10(s) to 100(s) of images

—○— Reports classified as child pornography by Hotline.ie accessible in Ireland

—■— Reports classified as child pornography by Hotline.ie accessible from (hosted) Ireland

Images of children 10 years and younger most often depict them being abused through sexual assault and extreme sexual assaults (bondage, torture and other degrading acts, etc); while images of children over 11 years of age most often depict explicit sexual posing or explicit sexual activity of a child i.e. masturbation.

THE CHILDREN IN THE IMAGERY



Additionally, Hotline.ie Analysts have noted virtual CSAI (i.e. drawings, cartoon images, computer generated pseudo-photographs and stories) was occasionally found alongside images of real children in collections or on websites providing a mix of legal adult pornography and child sexual abuse images/videos. While these represent less than 2% of 2018 child pornography reports, the potential harm is still present as individuals with a sexual interest in children may use this form of content as ways to explore fantasies of children being sexually abused.

Furthermore, technological advances now allow for the creation/production of computer-generated images that are almost indistinguishable from that of a real living child, or most commonly it could be the image of a real child that has been manipulated into a cartoon or drawing format (either still or animated). Sometimes these can also be representations of well-known children or fictional characters, or narratives (i.e. stories) detailing the progression of sexual abuse against a child.

Although, the virtual CSAI sample size is small, the content only depicts severe “fictional” sexual abuse (level 4) against childlike characters made to appear 10 years of age and younger [11% 3 and younger].

Year on year, Hotline.ie Analysts have witnessed the development of an ecosystem through the misuse of a variety of online services to distribute/share child sexual abuse images/videos. Meeting/community type based environments such as bulletin board systems, forums, chatrooms, social networking - private/closed groups, etc. facilitate direct communication between like-minded individuals on an international scale.

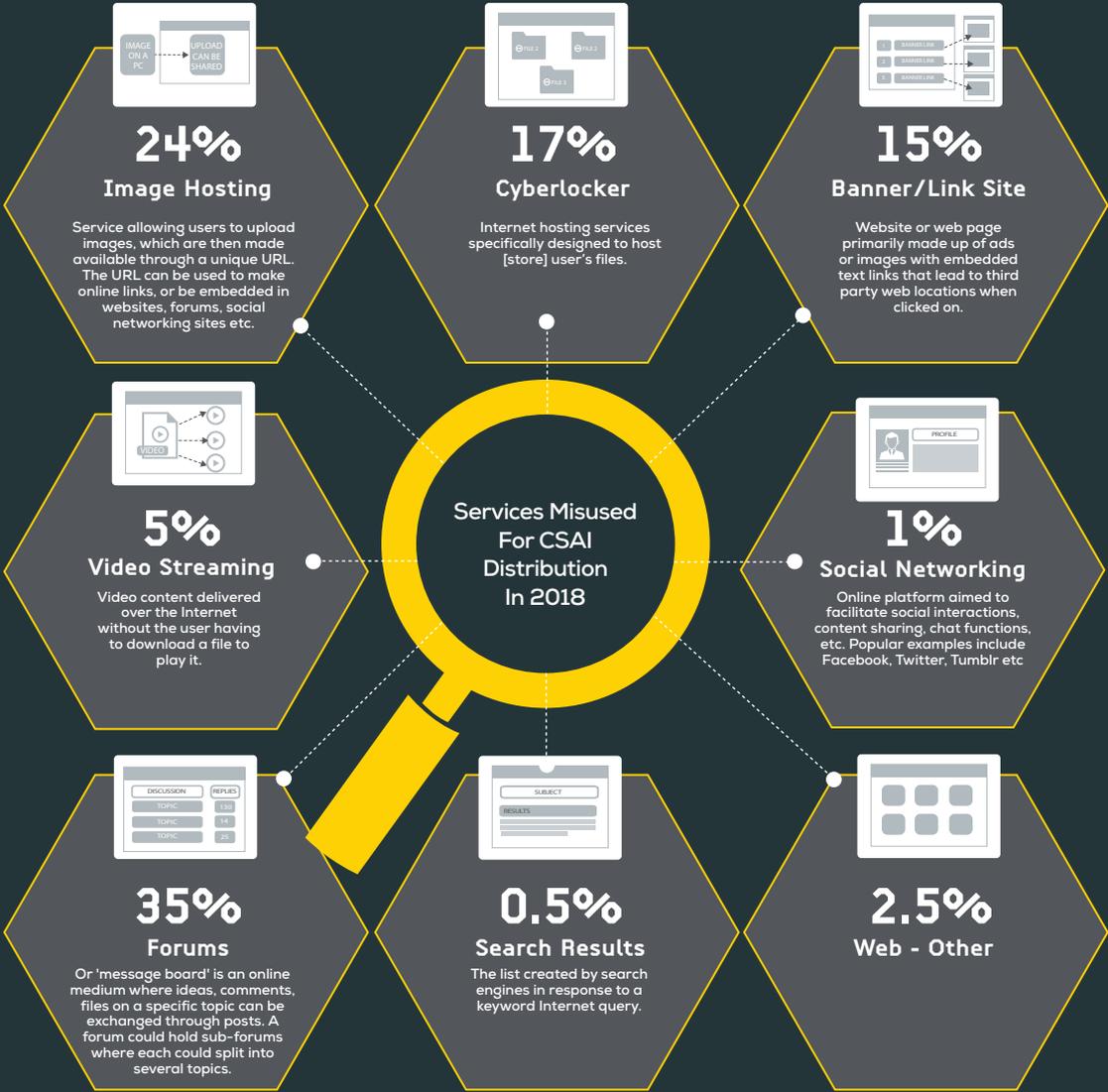
The most misused service type (in 2018) for CSAI distribution were forums (35%), with a marked increase of 23% from 2017, particularly due to the prevalence of reports pointing to anonymous imageboards - a type of forum that focuses on the posting of images rather

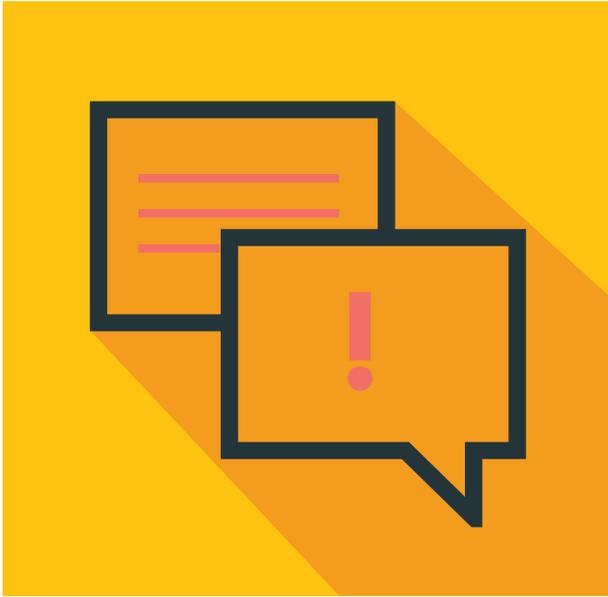
than primarily traditional text-based discussion. While it is common for a forum to have direct image and/or video upload capability, there are certain limitations which in turn lead users to share content through the further misuse of other online services i.e. links to image hosts, video streaming services and/or cyberlockers. A by-product is that CSAI may be advertised and hosted in multiple different locations and through a range of different type of online services.

If for example, CSAI is advertised in a forum but the actual images made available through links to an image hosting location, subsequently if only the forum is taken down the CSAI will still exist readily to be posted or shared in yet another forum or via chatrooms, etc. On the other hand if CSAI is only taken down at source (i.e. image host) then the forum can still act as a channel of communication for like-minded individuals and continue to facilitate the sharing of CSAI hosted at other/“new” locations.

This technique could be described as a fail-safe to enable CSAI availability online and as such, each of these reports requires diligence to ensure (1) CSAI is removed at source, which in turn may lead to removal from any other i.e. website that would be using the same particular CSAI hosting source even if those websites are unknown to Hotline.ie; and (2) removal of communication/distribution channel, where possible.

Services Misused For CSAI Distribution In 2018





In recent years, it has been noted by Analysts that forums have stopped being an end-destination for CSAI distribution and have rather become gateways, with much of the discourse observed in postings/comments focused on the perceived acceptability of the content with users attempting to legitimise or justify CSAI consumption, production and even commercialisation. For example 13% of the 2018 identified CSAI (1,437) abused ad networks to market and commercialise CSAI via pop-up advertising.

While only 10% of all publicly sourced reports received and processed in 2018 (12,113) pointed to forums, 1 in 3 were confirmed by Hotline.ie Analysts as CSAI. This finding would suggest that the public is less likely to come across

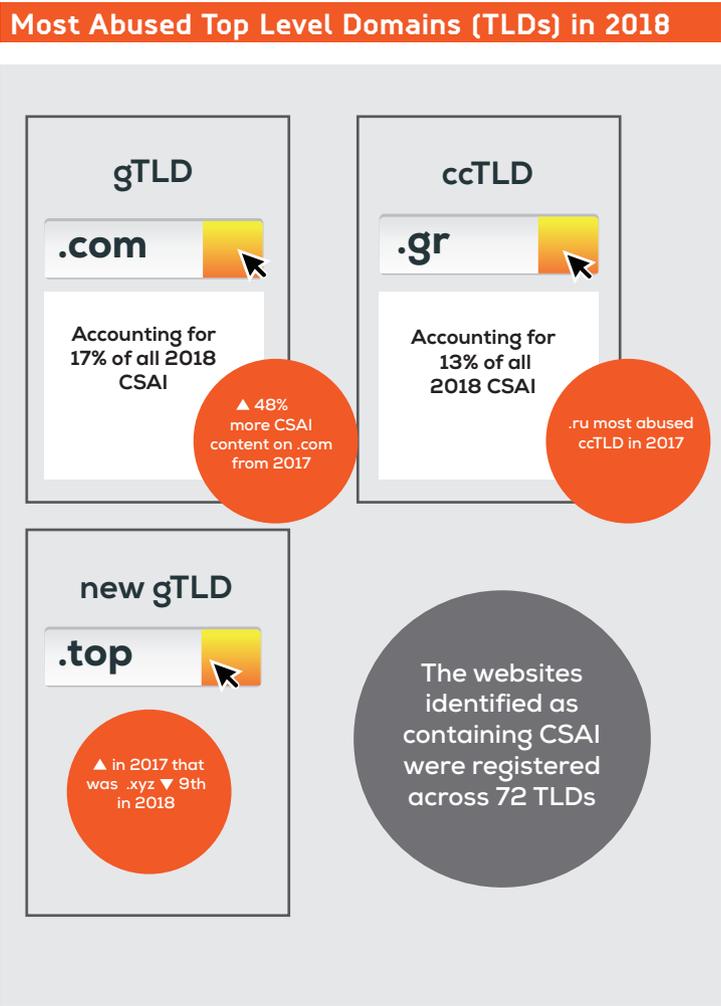
this service type and CSAI remains relatively hidden from public view when this method of communication and distribution is deployed.

Image hosting was the second most misused service type (24%); followed on third by cyberlockers (17%) found to contain gigabytes of CSAI. Additionally, Analysts have noted that over half of the identified cyberlockers were password protected, and in some cases the passwords were even hidden behind rudimentary codes. Similarly to forums, cyberlockers account for 3% of all reports received, while nearly one fifth were found by Analysts to contain CSAI.

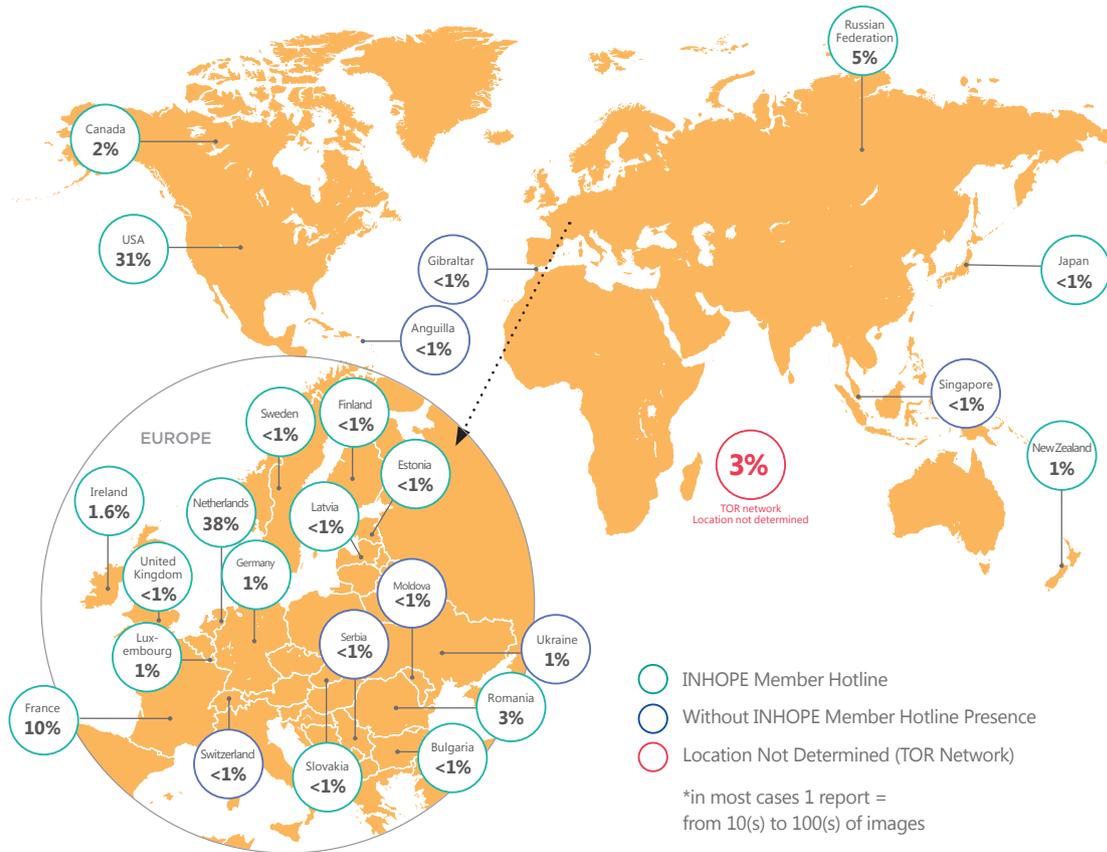
A continuing trend, from previous years, was the prevalence of "disguised CSAI websites" – where CSAI is only revealed if a pre-defined digital pathway followed, otherwise legal content is displayed. In some cases the digital pathway may start on legal adult pornography websites being misused by tech savvy offenders, going to new lengths to evade detection. In other cases forums, banner/link sites, image boards, URL shortener or website URL redirects may be misused either individually or as a chained digital pathway that would eventually lead to CSAI. In 2018, 11% of child pornography reports were identified as disguised CSAI websites with each displaying hundreds of images and videos. Since 2014 Hotline.ie has witnessed a year-on-year rise in disguised websites and while extremely time consuming our experienced Analysts have become adept at identifying these websites and the source location of the images/videos displayed through these CSAI websites.

In 2018, the websites containing child sexual abuse imagery were registered across 72 top level domains (TLDs) marking an increase of 60% from 2017; with five (.com, .gr, .fr, .top, .site) accounting for over 50% of all identified websites containing child sexual abuse images and videos. In simple words TLD refers to the last segment of a URL, the part that follows immediately after the "dot" symbol, and identifies something about the website associated to it, for example, its purpose, the owner, etc. TLDs are mainly classified into two categories: generic TLDs (gTLDs) which can be used by anyone for general purpose such as .com, .org, .net; and country-specific TLDs (ccTLDs) such as .ie for Ireland, .ru for Russia, .gr for Greece, etc.

Since 2014 many more new gTLDs i.e. .watch, .webcam, .bid, .coffee etc. have been released and as recently as 2015, Hotline.ie has started to see some of the new gTLD being abused for the distribution of child sexual abuse imagery. 34% of TLDs abused for CSAI distribution in 2018 were new gTLDs.



CSAI Hosting Patterns 2018



**HOTLINE.IE
TRACED CSAI TO
25 COUNTRIES
WORLDWIDE**

**18 COUNTRIES
HAVE AN INHOPE
MEMBER HOTLINE**

**7 COUNTRIES
WITHOUT AN
INTERNET
HOTLINE
PRESENCE**

The World map infographic on the preceding page shows where CSAI identified by Hotline.ie in 2018 appeared to be hosted (based on geographic IP lookups). Throughout 2018, Analysts traced CSAI to 25 countries worldwide, inclusive of Ireland.

Based on the content reported to Hotline.ie in 2018 it would appear that for the first time in the last decade the USA is no longer the country with the highest amount of CSAI traced to. Analysts traced 38% of child pornography reports as most likely hosted in the Netherlands, while the USA accounted for 31%.

In 2018, 545 CSAI reports were traced to the Netherlands which highlights a dramatic increase from 2017 [62 reports]. There has been a slight but noticeable decline in reports traced to the USA since 2016, while the opposite is true for the Netherlands, with it only hosting 3% of the CSAI in 2016. The sudden rise of reported material being traced to the Netherlands [1 in 3] and France [1 in 10] lends to a concerning 2018 trend of CSAI being increasingly hosted in Europe.

The prevalence of CSAI being traced to the Netherlands may be due to its low cost and high capacity hosting infrastructure when benchmarked against North America and even within Europe.

While in 2017 (for the first time in 8 years) there was no CSAI report found to be hosted in Ireland, by either Hotline.ie or other INHOPE member Hotline; in 2018, 1.6% of the CSAI reports appeared to be accessible from Ireland. The majority of the reports in question had been initially reported by the public to our French counterpart, Point de Contact, who subsequently forwarded the reports to Hotline.ie for further investigation and assessment in accordance with Irish criminal law.

In most cases a report can lead to a website that hosts hundreds or thousands of child sexual abuse images, however the ones found to be accessible from Ireland were isolated images hosted on a single domain. The domain itself appeared to be used to host static images for a Content Delivery Network [CDN] and could not be accessed without the specific URLs for the imagery. The electronic content provider, a member of ISPAI Hotline.ie, was contacted and the CSAI promptly removed. This appears

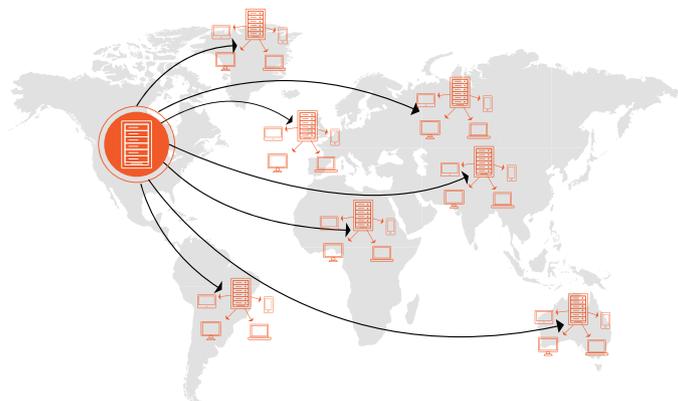
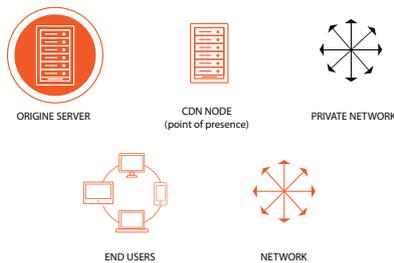


to have been an isolated incident as the reports were all received within the same timeframe and there has yet to be another illegal report for material hosted on that domain.

Continuing on the trend of 2017, Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) have become noticeably more widespread in the distribution of CSAI, while also playing a role in each of the 23 incidents of CSAI traced to Ireland.

In simple terms, the primary purpose of a CDN (see adjoined/ above infographic example) is to hasten the delivery of content of websites, particularly those with global audiences that are under high demand.

How a Content Delivery Network (CDN) works



The content delivery network copies the pages of a website to a network of servers that are dispersed at geographically different locations (points of presence), caching the contents of the page. When a user requests a webpage that is part of a content delivery network, the CDN will redirect the request from the originating site's server to a server at a point of presence closer to the user and subsequently deliver the cached content. CDNs will also communicate with the originating server to deliver any content that has not been previously cached.

The location of the originating server is not always easily identifiable and can be outright masked – the only way a user would know if a CDN has been accessed is if the delivered URL is different than the URL that has been requested. As such this can cause complications when seeking the true location of child sexual abuse imagery and is only surmounted through due diligence and cooperation with CDN providers.

Ireland is ever growing as an attractive location for data hosting for the likes of CDNs, with its location between America and Europe offering low-latency global connectivity. It is also increasingly becoming home to large datacentres owned by multinational companies and is expected to double its data hosting capacity within the next five years. This increase will represent a challenge in maintaining a hostile hosting environment to CSAI and one that Hotline.ie is taking very seriously, by constantly enhancing its procedures and system as the only way to remain at the forefront of the fight against online child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

A Partnership Approach

Child sexual abuse is a transnational crime taking place both offline and online. Combating this heinous crime against children requires coordinated cross-border cooperation and everyone in society playing their part.

Hotline.ie work would not be possible without the incredible partnerships we have formed, the support and ongoing collaboration between public sector, law enforcement, Internet companies operating in/from Ireland, and last but not least the public's readiness to report suspected illegal online content.

In Ireland, Hotline.ie works in partnership with ISPAI Hotline.ie members [Internet companies: access, hosting, search, electronic service providers] and in conjunction with An Garda Síochána; while its procedures and operations are approved and overseen by the Department of Justice and Equality.

Hotline.ie has internationally [INHOPE] certified and INTERPOL trained content Analysts ensuring that every report received is assessed by human eyes in accordance with rigorous standards by reference to Irish criminal law and INTERPOL guidelines for CSAI. Our Analysts attend regular mandatory vicarious stress counselling sessions to help them mentally process and cope with the exposure to disturbing images of children being sexually abused.

All CSAI identified, inclusive of intelligence gathered by Analysts during the assessment process, is notified directly to the Paedophile Investigation Unit of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau, and also made directly available to INTERPOL for inclusion in INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE) to assist law enforcement investigations and their efforts to identify both the child victims and offenders.

The process through which child sexual abuse images / videos are removed from the Internet is referred to as Notice and Takedown (NTD) and was pioneered by Ireland, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany and France over two decades ago.

Participating Internet companies (ISPAI Hotline.ie members) adhere to the NTD and the ISPAI Code of Practice and Ethics which, inter alia, ensure: [1] efficient and effective standards of co-operation with the Hotline.ie Service/ An Gardaí; [2] that each member company appoints a nominated point of contact for CSAI NTD; [3] acknowledgement of Hotline.ie as having the expertise to be authoritative in determining whether or not content is illegal under Irish law; and [4] streamlined procedures for CSAI removal from the Internet and preservation of evidence for Law Enforcement investigations.

This in turn means that participating Internet companies can rely on verified CSAI NTD, allowing one's technicians to effect takedown of specified illegal content, in confidence, without having to access and view the material which otherwise would be contrary to Irish law (it is illegal for anyone to "knowingly obtain access to child pornography by means of information and communication technology").

Additionally, to ensure international reach and swift-decisive action against CSAI irrespective of where in the world it may be hosted Hotline.ie works in conjunction with 45 other Internet Hotlines in 40 countries worldwide, which come together under the umbrella organisation INHOPE; as well as INTERPOL and Europol.

INHOPE's mission is to support and enhance the work of Hotlines by managing a secure International CSAI Report Management system

[ICCAM] which enables Hotlines to exchange relevant CSAI intelligence between different jurisdictions. Furthermore, INHOPE establishes policies and best practice standards for Hotline operations and ensures these are uniformly applied by existing and new member Hotlines. INHOPE is also responsible for expanding the network of trust by supporting the establishment of new Hotlines particularly in countries where there would appear to be a need for Hotline service.

ISPAI is one of the founding members of INHOPE, committed as ever to continue the collaborative work, knowledge sharing and the broadening of strategic partnerships across a wide array of sectors and Industries, recognising that coordinated cross border multi-stakeholder approach is the only efficient way to tackle the ever-growing problem of online child sexual exploitation.

“ Hotline.ie continues to be a valuable partner in combating the online sexual exploitation of children. I very much appreciate the diligent and professional work undertaken by staff at Hotline.ie; the service provided facilitates the removal of heinous images of child sexual abuse from the Internet. It is a worthwhile and necessary service, which ultimately protects children and one that An Garda Síochána are grateful to partner with. ”

Declan Daly, Detective Chief Superintendent
Garda National Protective Services Bureau

ISPAI Hotline.ie is also an integrated part of the Irish Safer Internet Centre a project encouraging responsible use of technology for a better and safer online environment for children and young people. The Irish Safer Internet Centre is one of 30 Safer Internet Centres in Europe and provides three main services:

Hotline.ie's SIC Partners



www.webwise.ie



www.childline.ie
www.ispcc.ie/childline



Supporting Parents
Supporting Children

www.npc.ie

1

An Internet safety awareness hub provided by Webwise

Part of the PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) Technology in Education in the Department of Education and Skills. Webwise promotes the autonomous, effective, and safe use of the Internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting parents, teachers, and children themselves. It also develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate Internet safety into teaching and learning in schools. Additionally, with the help of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel it develops youth oriented awareness raising resources and campaigns that address topics such as cyber bullying.

2

Helpline services: ISPCC-run Childline and the NPC support line

Childline provides 24/7 free confidential listening services for all children up to the age of 18 in Ireland. Childline can take reports on grooming and cyber bullying.

NPC Helpline is a confidential service for parents and guardians offering support and information.

3

Hotline.ie service, provided by ISPAI

Where members of the public can securely, anonymously and confidentially report suspected illegal content online.

The Road Ahead

2019 marks ISPAI Hotline.ie Service 20th anniversary and while we had hoped in starting this journey (1999) that the issue of online child sexual abuse and exploitation would have been eradicated, we are yet proud of the important role we have played and will continue to play for the protection of countless children within Ireland and abroad.

We strive to remain at the forefront of the fight against this abominable crime by continually honing our assessment expertise and adapting our systems to meet the ever-increasing challenges and requirements of the digital world. However, due to the unique nature of Hotline.ie's work, it is important to us that we are not solely reliant on automation to ensure the kind of sensitive content assessment and contextual interpretation that only a set of human eyes can truly and reliably perform. Simultaneously, we do recognise the importance of harnessing the power of technology particularly to help with report flagging and prioritisation and where possible reduce the exposure of our Analysts to previously identified child sexual abuse images/videos.

While evolving strategies to address criminal content once it becomes available on the Internet is extremely important, so too is preventing child sexual abuse through education, detection of problematic and/or predatory behaviour, which in turn could lead to opportunities for early intervention, and a national focus on addressing the lack of services for non-convicted sexual offenders in the community.

By tackling both the supply and demand we can truly reduce the likelihood of CSAI. For this to occur, adults around children need to be educated about the abuse and grooming process, how to recognise inappropriate behaviour and facilitate disclosures by children.

Additionally, with the majority of child sexual abuse images/videos depicting children 12 years of age and younger, sexual abuse education is critical for this age group as it is less likely that they would be able to recognise signs and inappropriate behaviour otherwise. The cost of not knowing is far too great!

Furthermore, organisations and professionals working in the child protection area should use best efforts to ensure Internet safety advice is not conflated with child sexual abuse prevention and awareness raising which would otherwise be a disservice to the recipients of this education.

We are committed to do everything in our powers to better protect children but we can't do this alone or in isolation. This needs to remain a national priority, where all components from the social aspects to the technical ones must be considered in further developing strategies and solutions to combat child sexual abuse and exploitation.

We remain optimistic that more can be done through education, better awareness, collaborative efforts, building on the expertise acquired over the last two decades and the incredible partnerships that we have been developing. We'll be exploring additional opportunities to work with law enforcement, ISPAI Hotline.ie participating Internet companies and other organisations working for the protection of children.

Our resources are finite and to be able to continue this important work we need all the help that we can get. We encourage others, who want to make a real difference by ensuring there is zero tolerance to the proliferation of this crime against children, to play their part whether it is by raising awareness, reporting suspect content to Hotline.ie, funding the Hotline.ie Service or collaborating on technology and research.

As we feel strongly about the role of education and prevention, and believe that even the smallest step matters, we have included a feature article in this year's Annual Report on

the amazing work of Children At Risk Ireland Foundation (CARI) in providing therapy and support to children and their families who have experienced child sexual abuse, rape, and incest and being a beacon of hope on their road to healing.



Feature Article - Awareness Raising Series

Children At Risk Ireland Foundation, (CARI)

by Emma Little, MSc, CEO

As human beings we are primed to have an interest in the news and celebrity, and celebrity paedophiles are no exception. However, the path of destruction paedophiles leave behind rarely receives nationwide coverage or attention. Children are the most vulnerable members of society and as anonymous victims and witnesses their voice is rarely heard in the media storm.

CARI very much welcomes every effort to track down child sex abusers and bring them to justice, including the work carried out by Hotline.ie in ridding the Internet of the images of child sexual abuse that paedophiles create and share online.

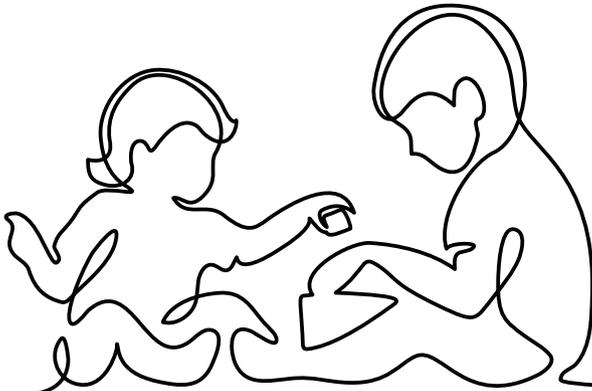
While it may be very difficult to conceptualise, the research shows that one in five children in Ireland is sexually abused - not by a celebrity, but by a member of their own family, a family

friend, peer, teacher or coach, someone they know and trusted. Such abuse happens behind closed doors - doors you may even walk by every day.

But what happens to the child victim and their family after the images of sexual assault and rape are found, removed from the Internet, the child is rescued, and arrests are made?

That's where we at CARI begin our work. At CARI, we are very much aware that these predators leave behind abused and traumatised children in their wake. For 30 years we have provided therapy and support to children and their families who have experienced child sexual abuse, rape and incest.

CARI has a support Helpline for parents who need to talk about what has happened in their own family with experts who can listen without judgement and advise on the next steps. We also accompany children and the non-abusive family members to forensic exams in hospitals, where evidence is gathered from the child's head to toe; where screening for sexually transmitted infections is conducted, and in some cases medical interventions. Additionally, CARI provides further post forensic exam telephone support for all in the family who need it.



Tusla social workers and clinicians are involved in interviewing sexually abused children and their parents who are then referred to us for our specialised child-led family-centred psychotherapy.

Children require therapy that is specifically tailored to them to suit their level of development. Educationalist Maria Montessori said that “play is the work of the child”, and we incorporate that ideal into our best practice psychotherapeutic protocol.

Our specialised psychotherapy allows children to express themselves freely and we facilitate a route to healing through art, creative play, role play, puppets, music (melodic and rhythmic), punch bags & boxing gloves, and movement. Parents are also offered therapeutic support. The service we offer is open-end, which means that a child and their non-abusive parent(s) are in therapy with us for as long as they need.

We begin to see positive outcomes for the child and their family within a year of starting therapy. Their feelings of shame, self-blame, and the stigma they experience recede and are reframed by the process. With appropriate child-led family-centred therapy, positive outcomes are possible, insofar that the child’s life and the family dynamic is no longer defined by the trauma they’ve endured.

CARI also offers Court accompaniment support services to child witnesses all over Ireland, and their families. Furthermore, we provide telephonic support and face to face support before, during and after the trial.

With the increased use of technology and 24/7 Internet connectivity, there is also an increased risk that children may stumble across or be exposed to unsuitable content on the Internet such as pornography, sexual and gender based violence, social media and all the peer pressure that it entails, and of course online gaming.

At CARI, we run a specialised programme of psychotherapy for children of up to 12 years of age who present with harmful sexualised behaviour, which is proving very successful. We are recognised experts in this field, and are frequently asked to develop training courses for professionals who work with children, for parents who feel they may have lost confidence in their parenting skills in the cyber-age, and for children who may feel vulnerable online.

We provide help to all those who work with children (i.e. schools, crèches, sports clubs, music and drama clubs and youth groups) by, for example, assisting with the development of robust child protection policies regarding harmful sexualised behaviour in children, and training of staff.

As technology becomes increasingly common in our society, most children who come to us for specialised therapy disclose that they were filmed or photographed during the course of their sexual abuse. Children have expressed concern that the images of their abuse may have been shared, stored or published on the Internet and that these images may resurface later in their lives. The knowledge that recorded evidence of their abuse exists in the form of images and/or videos understandably adds to their trauma.

So called “child pornography” is not a victimless crime. The images posted online are not just pixels - they depict real children being tortured and traumatised, and significantly add to the pain already endured during the course of the abuse. The knowledge that these images are on the Internet can lead to post-traumatic stress, re-victimisation, and prolonged suffering.

One client, a 13 year old girl who was sexually assaulted whilst walking through the park with her friends said “When I realised the whole school had seen the video of my sexual assault, I wanted to die... the sharing of that video was worse than the assault.”

CARI welcomes the initiative established and executed by the ISPAI Hotline.ie service in partnership with the Department of Justice, Internet Industry and the Gardaí, for the removal of child sexual abuse images/videos from the Internet. This service is vital in preventing the re-victimisation of children who have suffered sexual abuse.

I appeal to you, should you ever come across any images of child sexual abuse, rape, incest or torture on the Internet, please report these to Hotline.ie. There are anonymous numbers to call in the Gardaí should a child be in immediate danger, and Hotline.ie’s reporting service can be easily accessed online without having to give your own details. Not only is the sexual abuse of a child a crime, but so is the production, sharing, and downloading of child sexual abuse imagery.

We all have a role to play in protecting children and ensuring that these appalling crimes against the most vulnerable in society are stamped out. With simple resolve and actions, ordinary people like you and me can make an extraordinary difference in children’s lives: you don’t need to wear a cape to be a hero.

Let’s all work together to put an end to the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, and free them from the fear of repeat victimisation on their healing journey.

The bravery, courage and resilience of the children we help in CARI inspire us all every day. It’s a privilege to be able to give a voice to these brave children and serve them and their families on their road to healing, to hope, and to happiness.

To find out more about CARI’s training courses, please email: marie@cari.ie or phone our training department 01 830 8529.

If anyone is worried about a child in their care, please:

- call the CARI Helpline 1890 92 4567**
- or visit our website cari.ie for a call back**

We are waiting for your call.

ISPAI is a not-for-profit organisation and the legal entity delivering the Hotline.ie Service. ISPAI Members co-finance the www.hotline.ie service, abide by the Industry Code of Practice & Ethics and Notice & Takedown mechanism for the removal of child sexual abuse imagery from the Internet.



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