



Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies

Kingston University London



ANNOUNCEMENT

New Funded Research

EC Safer Internet Programme European Study of Online Grooming Behaviour

Research Aims & Rationale

This qualitative research aims to explore the process of Online Grooming and Victim Selection, focusing upon the behaviours of men who target children and young people online, interviews will be undertaken with convicted online groomers in the UK prison system and in prison systems in 3 other European sites. The research will be the largest study of online grooming commissioned to date in Europe.

Research Objectives:

1. Online Grooming: The research will describe the behaviour of both offenders who groom and young people who are 'groomed' and explore differences (e.g. in demographics, behaviour or profiles) within each group and how these differences may have a bearing on offence outcome.
2. ICT: The research will describe how information, communication technology is used to facilitate the process of online grooming.
3. Young victims: Further the current low knowledge base about the way in which young people are selected and prepared for abuse online
4. Education: The research aims to make a significant contribution to the development of educational awareness and preventative initiatives aimed at parents and young people,
5. Risk: Contribute to the development of online sex offender risk assessment and management knowledge

Research Consortium* (see page 3 for consortium detail)

- Research Lead and Management: Stephen Webster, National Centre for Social Research, London
- Research Management: Professor Julia Davidson, Kingston University, London & Co-Director Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies (CATS)
- Research Management: Professor Antonia Bifulco, Royal Holloway, University of London & Co-Director Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies (CATS)
- Advisor: John Carr

EU partners

- Professor Petter Gottschalk -BI Norwegian School of Management
- Professor Thierry Pham – University Mons-Hainault, Belgium
- Professor Vincenzo Caretti - University Palermo, Italy

Methods

The research will begin in June 2009 and will take 2.5 years to complete. A mixed methods approach will be employed including:

Phase 1- Scoping and Context

1. Literature review: literature and web search of relevant information in each country around internet grooming behaviour, legislative context and approaches to online safety.
2. Case files: Content analysis of a small sample of online groomer's case files in the UK (access granted by the Metropolitan Police) and interviews with stakeholders who work with Internet sex offenders in each European site will inform the development of the interview topic guide to be used in offender interviews.
3. Analysis: The transcribed and translated interviews will be collated by the lead partner (NatCen) for qualitative analysis.
4. Results of the analysis will be circulated for discussion by partners. The findings for 1st report used to structure sampling and interview questions for Phase 2.

Phase 2- Offender Interviews

1. Sample – small and purposive as few convicted groomers in the prison system in each country (N=50 in the UK, legislation since 2003). Grooming legislation now exists in two partner sites (Norway & Belgium)
2. In-depth interviews will be undertaken across the European sites with men who have been convicted for a sexual offence against a child involving online grooming.
3. Exploring online behaviour: Interviews will focus upon the selection and grooming of vulnerable children and young people; exploration of Internet use in offending and the link with contact offending.
4. All offender Interview data will be analysed by NatCen using the Framework method of analysis

Phase 3- Exploring Effective Dissemination

Focus groups will be undertaken on each site to explore the views of educators, parents and young people regarding the most effective means of communicating key messages from the project.

Phase 4- Dissemination

- Reports: for EC SIP.
- Project website: operational during and for one year after the project ends.
- Presentations and workshops: to agencies, organisations and at key international conferences
- International networks e.g. ENISA, VGT, CEOP, ISPCAN, IPES & IATSO etc .
- Scientific papers will be published in journals for academics, forensic practitioners and educationalists.
- Workshops- key stakeholders will be invited to participate on each partner site.
- Social networking sites to display key findings in each country.
- SIP Nodes: for young people, parents & educators via the in EU countries
- Safer Internet Days: presentations & activities.
- INSAFE and INHOPE networks utilised.
- Electronic leaflet for wide dissemination via the European Network and Information Security Network Agency (ENISA) (recent Internet safety guidance for parents).

* Consortium Detail

1. **Stephen Webster**- Chartered Psychologist
Project lead – Provision of expertise on offender treatment. Project lead on data collection. Expert on Sex Offender Treatment Programmes. Published extensively in the offender abuse area.
2. **Professor Julia Davidson** - Criminologist
Provision of expert advice on Internet sex offenders and policing the Internet. Expert in perpetrators and victims of sexual abuse, Internet sex offender behaviour and online policing. Published extensively in the offender abuse area.
3. **Professor Antonia Bifulco** – Lifespan Psychologist
Provision of expert advice on project design & child victims, co-ordinator of EU partners. Expert in victims of abuse, lifespan consequences for mental health & attachment style of victims and offenders. Published extensively on victims of abuse.
4. **Professor Petter Gottschalk** – Information technologist
Expert on internet abuse and Professor of information technology and policing knowledge management, also lecturer at University Police College. Has written in area with Prof Davidson.
5. **Professor Thierry Pham** – Forensic Psychologist
Professor of Forensic Psychology and expert on research and treatment among internee patients and prison offenders of violent & sexual crimes.
6. **Professor Vincenzo Caretti** – Developmental and psychodynamic psychologist
Psychiatrist and expert in Psychopathic Personality and identification of psychological factors for violent and sexual crimes and criminal profiling. Expert on psychological impacts of new media and new technologies.

Contacts:

Stephen Webster: s.webster@natcen.ac.uk

Julia Davidson: j.davidson@kingston.ac.uk

Antonia Bifulco: a.bifulco@rhul.ac.uk

*Subject to conclusion of negotiation with EC Safer Internet Programme (April 2009)