

A comparative review to understand what provision and support is available to personnel who view online child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) as part of their job role across sectors

Study aiming to identify, review and compare the provision and support given to personnel who view CSAM as part of their job role.

Key details

Lead institution	Anglia Ruskin University
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Police region	Eastern
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lincolnshire PoliceSussex PoliceDevon and Cornwall Police
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	August 2023
Date due for completion	April 2024

Research context

The importance of police officer wellbeing has been recognised, and there is a growing body of research regarding the provision of support given to personnel who view child sexual abuse

materials (CSAM) as part of their job role (College of Policing 2019, College of Policing 2020, Parkes and others 2019, Seigfried-Spellar 2019).

However, following this guidance is optional and some research highlights ongoing concerns regarding barriers to accessing support and the efficacy of support provided to child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) officers (Redmond and others 2023, MacEachern and others 2019). There remain significant gaps in knowledge regarding the support provided to police who view and remove CSAM and/or investigate CSAE offences.

This study aims to identify, review and compare what provision and support is given to personnel who view CSAM as part of their job role across sectors. The sectors under review are:

- Statutory: Policing Online Investigation Team (POLIT)/Internet Child Abuse Team (ICAT) investigators across England and Wales.

Research questions

- What support should be provided for personnel who view CSAM as part of their job role?
- What are the facilitators/ barriers to the provision of this support?

Objectives

- Produce a map of the landscape for the provision of support.
- Good practice and areas for development to improve the provision of support for ICATs nationally.
- Investigate:
 - the impact of viewing CSAM on investigators
 - facilitators/barriers to accessing support
 - the quality of support provision
- Utilise lesson learnt across the sectors, to develop and disseminate best practice guides and training resources.
- To Inform policy and develop briefing papers.

Research methodology

1. Desk based literature search

The review will identify existing guidance and literature regarding what should be happening in relation to the wellbeing and support provision of professions viewing CSAM as part of their job role. This will include, but is not limited to:

- the impact that viewing CSAM may have on investigators
- levels of engagement with, and barriers to, accessing support by investigators
- type/quality of support provision
- information regarding good practice and areas for development regarding provision of support for personnel across the sectors, such as best practice guides, training resources, policy and briefing papers

2. Analysis of staff wellbeing policy documents

Documents outlining policy and procedures regarding staff wellbeing provision will be requested from participating organisations. These will be selected from existing Policing Institute for the Eastern Region (PIER) partnerships and contacts. If non-disclosure agreements are required, PIER will liaise with the Anglia Ruskin University legal team to prepare such agreements.

The policy documents will be reviewed to determine:

- the support that is currently in place for these personnel
- case studies of how this support is utilised, to identify any facilitators/barriers that may exist to provision of support
- identify areas of good practice and gaps in support provision across the sectors

3. Individual interviews

Online semi-structured interviews and focus groups will be held with representatives from police agencies. It is envisaged that individual interviews will be conducted with personnel with managerial positions.

References

College of Policing. (2019). [Supporting the wellbeing of Internet Child Abuse Teams \(ICAT\). Introduction and guidance.](#) Oscar Kilo.

College of Policing. (2020). [Responding to trauma in policing: A practical guide.](#)

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MacEachern AD and others (2019). Secondary traumatic stress: Prevalence and symptomology amongst detective officers investigating child protection cases. Journal of police and criminal psychology, 34(2), 165-174.

Parkes R, Graham-Kevan N and Bryce J. (2019). "'I put my 'police head' on": Coping strategies for working with sexual offending material'. The Police Journal, 92(3), 237-26

Redmond T and others. (2023). 'How we can protect the protectors: learning from police officers and staff involved in child sexual abuse and exploitation investigations'. Frontiers in Psychology, 14, 1152446.

Seigfried-Spellar, KC. (2018). 'Assessing the psychological well-being and coping mechanisms of law enforcement investigators vs. digital forensic examiners of child pornography investigations'. Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 33, 215-226.

Tags

- [Child sexual exploitation](#)