Investigating the dark web – new training available

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Learn how the dark web and metaverse are used for criminal activity

News   2 mins read

Navigating the dark web and how it is used by criminals is challenging for frontline teams. New training developed by the College's Digital Intelligence and Investigation Programme will help staff to:

- recognise the differences between the surface web, deep web and dark web
- identify what can be found on the dark web
- summarise how anonymising software works
- recognise how the metaverse is used in conjunction with the dark web
- provide insight into the risks of the dark web and how to stay safe

The dark web

The web, or surface web as it's known, is made up of public-facing websites that can be searched for and accessed easily.

The deep web sits below the surface web and houses content that requires a login or lives behind a paywall. This includes things like online banking, private social media and subscription services.

The dark web sits below the deep web. It's made up of hidden sites that are accessed using specially designed, anonymising browser software. Using it is not illegal and it has legitimate uses making it challenging to identify if a crime is being committed. Once connected to the dark web, there are search engines that can help users find sites. Knowing what to look out for is a key part of the new training.

People often use the dark web to bypass internet restrictions and to avoid potential surveillance. The dark web can mask illegal activity and offers criminals an ideal environment to operate. These illegal activities can include:

- drug dealing
- the sale of weapons and bomb making equipment
- stolen personal and financial data.

Sites hosting child sexual abuse material (CSAM) can also be found on the dark web.

Training

If you're investigating a crime, there are key things to look out for that could indicate activity associated with the dark web. The training supports frontline officers, staff and volunteers. It raises awareness of, and responds to, digital elements of investigations.

The training is available to all forces via the College Learn platform (you will need to register and log in).

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