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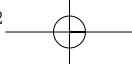
CHILDHOOD
WORLD CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

ABUSED ONLINE



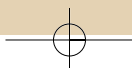
Anders Nyman

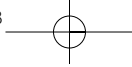
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and the County Council of Östergötland



This report is written by *Anders Nyman*, Stockholm, Psychologist and Psychotherapist, Commissioner and Film censor, with several years of work within the field of child abuse counselling.

The reference group for the Project consists of *Lena Banck*, Head of Unit at BUP Elefanten; *Carl-Göran Svedin*, Professor, Div of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University; *Lars Lööf*, Head of Unit of the Council of Baltic Sea States, and *Ingrid Åkerman*, National Coordinator at the National Board of Health and Welfare and Senior Advisor, World Childhood Foundation.





Preface

This is the first report published by the project '*Support for children and adolescents subjected to abuse and exploitation via Internet.*' This project was initiated and is conducted by BUP Elefanten and is financed by World Childhood foundation.

Children and adolescents spend a lot of time in front of the computer and through this project we aim to learn more about how they communicate using modern technology. Often they know more than adults about this technology and it is important for all of us to increase our knowledge about the risks as well as the opportunities children are facing in this environment.

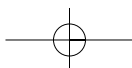
We need to learn more about the values of adolescents and how children and adolescents are affected when they suffer abuse online. We need a greater knowledge of concrete experiences, thoughts and feelings concerning the risks run. Our knowledge of the long-term effects on children and adolescents of this exposure is insufficient.

This project aims to provide new and better tools and methods to professionals working to support children so that they can better protect children from abuse and, if abuse has already occurred, know how adequately and correctly to receive them. The further strengthening of our preparedness to assist children and adolescents with correct prevention and competent support is of the utmost concern.

It is our hope that we, in three years when this project is finished, will have increased our knowledge of how to help and to support children who have suffered abuse online.

Gunilla von Arbin
Secretary General
World Childhood Foundation

Lena Banck
Head of Unit
BUP Elefanten, Child and
Adolescent Psychiatric Unit



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'well I don't think you should be scared but maybe careful like I wasn't and happened to give my mobileno to a "nice" guy who turned out to be 52 years' old and sent lots of death threats to me but I told the police and he's been caught but I wouldn't do it again because then I was really scared!!'

Exerpt from an e-mail sent to BRIS = Children's Rights in Society (Swedish non-profit association)

I. General summary

Increasingly, reports from professionals as well as from children and adolescents themselves and their parents on violations, abuse, bullying and harassments include information that these are not infrequently linked to the new technology embodied in mobile telephones, digital photography and computers.

At this very moment (February 2006) it is reported that a film clip found on a mobile telephone describes how an unidentified minor girl is forced to insert a burning cigarette and a tree branch into her vagina. A group of young men surround her chanting 'slut.'¹ These images have been stored in the camera for about six months and it is not known whether they have been further distributed to other mobiles or posted online. The centre of attention in relation to this event is of course the girl who suffered through it; how she feels today, the help she has been offered or needs to be offered, whether she accepts assistance and questions relating to the fact that the event was filmed.

The identification of those responsible and the girl herself will in all probability be possible precisely because the event was filmed and the likelihood that the girl will receive help is thereby increased. At the same time we have to ask ourselves whether the abuse had occurred were it not precisely for this filming. Is it possible that the presence of the camera can trigger this type of abuse or that it somehow enhances the assailant's experience? Is the possibility to acquire a trophy in this way, to triumph over and further to humiliate the victim, to show others and to brag so tempting that there now is cause to

¹ *Dagens Nyheter* 2006-02-10, p. 10

focus on the importance of modern technology in relation to abuse of children and adolescents?

This report aims to shed light on these issues. The Online victim project was initiated by *BUP Elefanten*, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinic in the region of Östergötland and is financed by *World Childhood Foundation*.

What the children and adolescents who in this way have been abused in Internet related settings have in common is that we as yet have very little knowledge of who they are, how they feel, what their needs are in terms of assistance and treatment and what kind of reception would be of most help to them.

In order to find out I contacted therapists and other professionals who in different ways have experience with Internet related abuse of children and adolescents.

When speaking to representatives of the treatment centres I visited it became apparent that there was indeed experience of abuse of children and adolescents with varying degrees of connection to the new technologies. It was a question of single cases or of children caught up in one of the big 'affairs' involving abuse of a large number of children which are from time to time revealed. What most of these cases had in common was that the new technology was never really a focus of attention. The therapist was more concerned with allowing the youth to deal with the immediate trauma as well as betrayal and feelings of guilt and shame. To the extent that it was thought that new technology was important it was in relation to the dual trauma which sometimes existed: to have been both vulnerable and abused and, on top of that, to know that it had all been documented and made available to others.

Several therapists interviewed expressed a conviction that the use of Internet has brought with it an increase in child prostitution in this country which is both more hidden and more difficult to get at compared to when it occurred almost 'openly in the streets.'

The therapists interviewed were also in agreement on the change in traditional values and conceptions taking place in sections of youth culture. This is particularly the case with what is considered to be normal or embarrassing in relation to pictures of the young person in sexual circumstances. In this context, the constant presence of the camera in youth groups is likely to be of importance, as well as reality shows and pornography to which they have easy access.

In the teams visited there was a strong opinion that there are good reasons for highlighting the new technology, both in terms of the risks run by certain youths and how they end up in trouble and, when they do, how they can be received. The new technology can render possible and incite risk behaviour in both perpetrators and the afflicted children and adolescents.

The knowledge and experience now being accumulated in this field need to be spread to children, adolescents, parents as well as to therapists and other professionals in the education sector as well as to other professionals working with children. This, of course, requires continued initiatives within the non-profit as well as the public sectors as regards continued research and theory development.

Landstinget i Östergötland, BUP Elefanten, (The County Council in Östergötland, Sweden, BUP Elefanten) in cooperation with World Childhood Foundation, intends to map out and to follow up cases of abuse connected to information and communication technology over a three-year period starting in spring 2006. The intention is further to deepen our knowledge of the eventual specific needs of boys and girls affected. This report is meant to constitute a first step in this direction.

At the end of this report, four papers in the field are summarised which all comprise up-to-date knowledge, positions and experience. These papers establish that increasing numbers of children and adolescents are unwillingly and willingly exposed to *graphic pornographic material online*. Many young people state that they have felt worried, scared, violated and wished that they never had come across this material. To what extent children and adolescents suffer harm from exposure to graphic pornography no one can really say.

The papers are also in agreement that more and more children and adolescents are being bullied and harassed using new technology. Internet and mobile telephones offer effective tools to whomever wants to embarrass others in that degrading information can be forwarded to a large number of people very quickly; vulnerability becomes apparent to an inestimable number of spectators, something which has devastating consequences for the person who suffers it.

According to the authors, the adults who surf the net with the view to contacting children and adolescents for sexual purposes constitute a growing problem. In most cases, their attempts are rejected but extended preparations for abuse, so-called online grooming, may lead to contacts in real life – offline – where children and adolescents can end up being abused. In addition to the sequels of physical traumas such as unwanted sex and rape, these youths may need a long time to come to terms with the betrayals and manipulations they have suffered.

Internet is very important for the commercial sexual exploitation of children through *the production and distribution of images of sexually abused children*, so-called child pornography. Most children who suffer from this remain unidentified. *Young people themselves increasingly offer online sexual services*. This includes posing online via webcam as well as offline contact.

II. Introduction and background

The accelerating development in information and communication technology (ICT) over these last few years has meant that the limits for the amounts of information that can be spread and with what speed keep being pushed back. Possibilities for communication appear virtually limitless. Time and space are no longer the natural limits we have become accustomed to in relation to where one person may contact another. This of course gives rise to opportunities and risks the consequences of which we today are unable to survey. An active online social life with known as well as unknown people is now the stuff of every day for most children and adolescents. They spend a large part of their spare time in front of the computer searching for information, buying and selling, downloading music and films, playing games, alone or together with known or unknown others, mailing, chatting, socialising and getting to know other children and adolescents. Mobile telephones, gaming consoles, Mp3 players, GPS technology, cameras and musical instruments are being synchronised, integrated and digitalised in an accelerating pace where communication between people and the exchange of information constitute the focal points. As with all communication, this interchange brings with it huge possibilities for creativity, joy, learning, growth and development for those children and adolescents who participate and who are standing in the doorway to the information technological revolution of which we as yet have seen only the beginning.

The new technology is an instrument, intrinsically neither good nor bad. It is at the disposal of those who wish to use it. Like any other technical advance it can be used for good and bad. It can be seductive, addictive, used excessively, appear incomprehensible or unnecessary, enjoy praise and suffer scorn. The way in which the new technology is today at the disposal of children and adolescents, how it is being used, who ends up in trouble in the meeting places it offers are all questions we are only progressively learning the answers to. There is still uncertainty as to whether the new technology is the cause of the problems experienced by children and adolescents or whether it constitutes no greater threat than traditional ways of making contact. We have established that it plays a role as a forum but how dangerous a tool it really is we cannot say for sure.

Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which discusses the role of the mass media, emphasises the importance of the child's right to access to information from a range of national and international sources

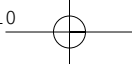
'especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.' At the same time, the Convention mentions the child's right to be protected against material which can threaten such well-being and harm the child. The State parties are encouraged to develop strategies for how to protect children from information which may have a harmful impact on them. This also concerns the internet which, in this regard, constitutes a very apt mirror of the bad as well as the good aspects of people's thoughts, feelings and actions.

Internet and new technology have come to play a prominent part in discussions surrounding the rights and vulnerability of the child, issues which have attracted increased interest over the last 20 years. Sexual abuse of children, trafficking, child prostitution, images of sexual abuse of children (so-called child pornography) and, consequently, pornographically exploited children, rapes and harassment have been the focus of discussions around the vulnerability of children and in this respect web-based information has become increasingly important. It is likely that the internet and new technology in general have constituted important sources of inspiration, means of communication for economic transactions and as part of marketing strategies, as well as tracing, uncovering and judicial treatment, and even rehabilitation.

When we attempt to define the field of *'Internet related violation of children and adolescents'* we are faced with a number of questions. One of the most pressing is of course the child in the image, the abused and pornographically exploited children. 'The child in the image' in these cases is almost always unknown. Only about 400 of over ten- or maybe even 50,000 children in this trade have been identified. For this reason, we do not really know how the single, abused child has experienced and dealt with the violations. Another question is the use of new technology in bullying and harassment between young people and its devastating consequences for who suffers it. Risk groups or risk behaviour of young people who make contact with unknown people online or in connection with online activities and who then end up in different kinds of trouble are also of urgent concern. And we must not forget the group of young people who themselves are active in offering sexual services for money, online as well as offline.

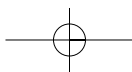
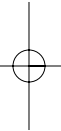
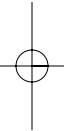
In order to take a first step on the way to greater knowledge of these children who in various ways have suffered not from the new technology per se but from how they and others have used it, *BUP Elefanten*, with funding from World Childhood Foundation, has taken the initiative to a first mapping out-exercise. The ambition has been to identify a number of interrogations which can serve as a point of departure for further initiatives, discussions and methodology development.

By summarising articles and reports in the field and by interviewing



therapists and other professionals it is thought to provide structure to these issues. This report aims to discuss what the needs of young people affected are and how they are to be satisfied. It also gives a few examples of what can happen to children and adolescents and an idea of how it is experienced and dealt with by the young person her- or himself.

The author is responsible for all the interviews, as well as their summarising and interpretation. He is also responsible for the conclusions drawn. The report has been reviewed and cleared by the employer and the reference group.



III. Professional experiences and reflections in Sweden

With the aim of learning about experiences and thinking around current, ongoing or finished cases involving internet related violation of children and adolescents I made contact with and met representatives from a number of treatment centres in Sweden:

- BUP Elefanten, Child Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic, Linköping
- BUP VASA Child Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic, Stockholm
- Team Emilia, Malmö
- BUP, Child Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic in Huddinge
- Crisis Centre for Children and Young People, Save the Children, Stockholm

The overarching issues and problem areas I sought to address in these interviews were:

What is the collective experience of the team in relation to internet related abuse?

What is the procedure for determining whether internet related violations and abuse have occurred?

Is it a reasonable assumption that the needs of children who have suffered from internet related violations differ from the needs of children who have suffered abuse with no connection to the internet and, if so, how?

How do children and adolescents in general think/feel/relate to risks in general and what is the situation in this regard for those who end up in trouble? What are their stories? How do they articulate their experiences? Is it generally speaking easier or more difficult for children to articulate their experiences of abuse when they have been tricked using the new technology?

What is the general impression on the distribution of risk groups and risk behaviour among children and adolescents? Is there an impression that those children who risk (and do) end(ing) up in internet related difficulties are the same as those who would in other circumstances? Which types of efforts/starting points/treatment do therapists feel are particularly apt for children and adolescents with experiences of this kind?

In order further to highlight reactions of abused young people, risk groups and risk behaviour of those who end up in trouble via contacts made online, I interviewed Ulrika Rogland, the prosecutor currently working on the so-called 'Alexandra case' in Malmö Regional Criminal Court.

In conjunction with the interview with BUP, the child psychiatric outpatient clinic in Huddinge I also interviewed Elsy Carleryd Franzén, psychologist and researcher tasked by Huddinge municipality with documenting the experiences of the so-called 'Huddinge case' where a large number of children were abused by a man who documented the abuse and spread it online.

I. BUP-Elefanten

BUP-Elefanten is a specialised unit providing psychotherapeutic help to children and adolescents when there are suspicions of, or ascertained cases of, sexual abuse and/or assault. The unit is located in Linköping. *BUP-Elefanten* works with research and methodology development in the fields of aggressivity/sexuality and abuse.

At first, the team came to the conclusion that since they had so little knowledge of the internet and the chat culture in which the boys and girls they met were involved, they were not asking the right questions. In the team there was a range of experience of internet related abuse and violations. Someone told of meeting young girls below the age of fifteen who were more or less 'obsessed' with surfing and chatting with men, who sent pictures of themselves in various states of undress and who dated unknown men. Other cases concerned girls who had been raped in connection with meeting someone they met and chatted with online after having posted sexy images of themselves. In a few cases a girl had also received threats via SMS after the rape.

The consensus in the team was that these were insecure girls who were starved of recognition and who lacked adequate networks of adults who could monitor, interfere and provide advice and support. One team member commented the dilemma of one of the girls thus: 'It was the quest for instant recognition which caused her to disregard the more long term consequences.'

The team did not have any real experience of how children and adolescents feel about the fact that for the foreseeable future there might be images online of them in various states of undress or in otherwise compromising situations. A few had been involved in discussions with parents of children who, unbeknownst to them, had been photographed naked on beaches and in swimming pools. Should they tell the children or not? In those situations, the pro-

professionals had chosen to follow and to support the parents' decision, whether or not that meant telling the child of the existence of these images.

The team expressed a wish for more discussions and guidance with regard to these new problems. There are neither guidelines, nor experience, nor precedents which could serve as support. The specific needs and avenues for treatment which might be useful in connection with this type of abuse were not yet the subject of a team-wide consensus. The treatment methods and avenues used had been developed for treating children suffering from violation and trauma. A number of team members admitted to a lack of knowledge and experience in order to be able to draw any conclusions regarding special methods or ideologies. The issue of 'dual violation' was discussed and it was not really known whether the fact that the abuse had been documented was of particular concern to the young people. 'For some of them maybe...', one therapist hypothesised, 'but maybe it is more a case of us not asking', another therapist said.

To summarise and to conclude, the team were in agreement that something is happening within youth culture which they are unable to survey. Cameras

13 year-old Emma made contact with a man on a chatsite who thought she was pretty and she was offered to 'help out' with the model and escort agency run by the man. When Emma met the man who was in his forties, she though he seemed nice, understanding and that he appreciated her in a way she had not experienced before. She fell in love with the man, thought that he was in love with her and they began a sexual relationship. The man wanted Emma to help him find girls for his business, which Emma did. She convinced friends to take 'romantic' pictures of themselves, which meant images of a more or less pornographic nature. For this they each received a couple of hundred SEK. In order then to be approved for the man's 'escort business' they had to have sex with him. They were then offered to different men who demanded sexual favours in exchange for payment. This included Emma. When it dawned on her that she in no way was the man's girlfriend but was being manipulated and tricked to think that she was, she was of course disappointed and angry. During the treatment offered to her it became apparent that it was the deceit which troubled her the most; that she had fallen out with her friends who accused her of tricking them, that it was her fault that they had been abused, and that her mother called her a whore.

Anonymised case from one of the outpatient clinics visited

and images are ever-present when young people meet, off- as well as online. In combination with the possibilities of quick communication with others you know or do not know now available, they are an important part of the constant flow of meetings, sex, flirtation, conflicts and show-downs which are always a result of human interaction.

ICT brings with it new ways to disagree, to seek revenge and to solve conflicts which previous generations cannot really keep up with. A team member stated that 'we need to know more about how it feels/is experienced and related by the young people on a more everyday basis in order to develop our capability to ask the right questions.' Someone stated that it should be standard practice to ask questions about the presence of cameras, internet habits, and how risk calculations and decisions are made, in connection with young people in difficulties as well as in more normal circumstances.

In another team member's view, 'as therapists we need to get used to the idea that the cameras are present both in connection with abuse of young people and when young people interact normally.' The team discussed the possibility that the borderlines between what was considered, respected, normal and private, versus indecent and embarrassing were shifting. 'Is it possible that the thought of there being images of me naked, having sex or being drunk online is of less concern to a young internet user today than it is for a less internet savvy generation of adults?'

This last question remained unanswered as the interview was concluded.

2. Outpatient clinic BUPVasa

BUP Vasa is a specialist unit within the Stockholm regional health care authority which offers treatment to children and adolescents and their families in case of suspected or ascertained sexual abuse.

At the meeting it was concluded that they had relatively little experience with cases involving internet related issues. The team's primary area of activity is children and adolescents who have been sexually abused by someone close. Of the 40-50 new cases yearly only 'a few' involve abuse by strangers. In this respect, reference is made to 'a couple of cases of child pornography', where they had been in contact with children who had been photographed in connection with sexual abuse and 'a couple of cases of internet chat-ups' where they had met adolescents who had ended up in more or less severe difficulties after dating someone they had met on a chat site. When dealing with these adolescents, focus had been on the trauma resulting from the sexual abuse without

any particular attention having been paid to the internet related aspects of the abuse suffered by the young people. The children themselves had not expressed any need to broach this particular subject.

A team member noted the following in connection with the identification of risk groups for internet related violations: 'As we are about to identify these in part new risk groups, and as far as we are concerned it is mostly girls, we need to discard the traditional profile of the girl at risk.' Another team member was of the opinion that often the girls they met in connection with these cases were 'girls who want to try something new.' Several team members speculated that possibly there were aspects of the traditional range of treatment solutions which did not suit these groups. 'We need to know whom to offer support and assistance, to identify these in part new groups of abused young people, to know who is suffering and how.'

A team member: 'With regard to young people who end up in trouble because they are drunk and meet the wrong people, the adult world has cultural competence. With these types of dangers, we do not.'

A team member opined that it is still the adult world which defines what constitutes a violation with respect to the abused young people: 'We need to know more about where the border is for what is truly harmful and traumatising. In order to acquire this knowledge, we need to approach fundamental research free from earlier preconceptions of what is harmful, normal, embarrassing or not.'

The team were in agreement that a combination of clinical experience and more preventive forms of general discussions with young people about these issues would be useful.

Someone was of the opinion that 'young people need help from adults in deciphering the manipulations they suffer.'

A group of boys had made contact with an older man who had posted images of himself and a younger man in a sexual situation. The boys decided to seek out the man and 'kick his ass' since he, according to them, was a 'paedophile.' When they met him he offered them to join him on a boat trip if they agreed not to assault him and they accepted. There he provided them with large amounts of liquor and cigarettes. Since the boys had been reported as missing, the police were involved. None of the boys were willing to tell what they had been doing and therefore the case was closed.

In the treatment which was offered to the boys none of them were very interested in talking about their experiences.

Anonymised case from one of the outpatient clinics visited

In relation to the team's experience of working with children who have suffered pornographic exploitation, the team state that the characteristic aspect of these cases is the child's feeling of having been tricked, knowingly manipulated and betrayed by someone they have trusted, rather than the worry that there are embarrassing images of them online.

These cases are special in that the images might have been taken and posted when the children were relatively young and incapable of understanding what was going on. The abuse might have been camouflaged as 'games' the meaning of which the child did not really comprehend. It is when the children grow older and enter puberty and remember these events or are informed of them that the events acquire a different significance and need to be processed in a way which was not necessary when the children were considerably younger. The fact that images depicting what the child has gone through exist provides opportunities for treatment in the sense that they constitute hard evidence of what actually happened.

3. Team Emilia

Team Emilia is a service for sexually abused girls run by the city of Malmö since 1986. The majority of treatment takes place in discussion groups. Since the start, about one thousand girls have come to Team Emilia. The team is of the opinion that lately child prostitution in the Malmö region has increased. One team member thinks that this is connected to the rapid technological development.

Earlier, when prostitution was a more open affair, it was easy to keep track of the girls who disappeared, etc. When under-aged girls showed up they were reported and picked up by police and social services. Today, most of the prostitution is conducted over the internet and is considerably more difficult to monitor. There are girls below the age of eighteen who themselves offer sexual favours on – as well as offline. It is difficult to get through to them with offers of support. The anonymity conferred by the internet makes it possible, for instance, for girls and boys to show themselves naked before a webcam to someone who, using a mobile telephone, can put a couple of hundred SEK on a pay-as-you-go card. It is not known whether these girls see themselves as victims, prostitutes or merely as being 'clever.' Nor do we know who they are, how they are feeling or indeed what their motives and needs are, which sort of help they would need, or even if they need any help at all.

The team recollects a couple of cases where girls have ended up in trouble as a result of contacts made on online chat sites. In no case does the therapist

know whether there are images of the girls posted online. The team does not focus specifically on the internet aspect but discusses the general dangers presented by internet in groups of girls with whom they are in contact. Despite this, one team member states that 'we probably do not ask specific questions regarding this.' 'We are probably more interested in their experiences of the abuse itself.' 'One is curious', one team member says, 'we have understood that a lot is going on in this field.'

A team member mentions that the border for what is considered 'normal' in relation to exhibiting oneself in intimate situations, to have sex more or less in public, sex with friends, and sex in exchange for payment might be shifting. To a certain extent, the opinion is that web culture, reality show culture, and consumption of pornography may hasten this shift.

The team has planned a 'web night' with the girls to deal with precisely these issues.

When I ask the team what they have learnt in terms of how young people think and reason when they take these risks I am told that the decisive factors are impulse, peer pressure and the need for immediate appreciation and that this outweighs thinking ahead and reasoned risk calculations. The team is in agreement that these are girls who are at risk in a more traditional sense, girls without adequate adult support, poor self esteem, and experiences of previous abuse and neglect, drug abuse and poor schooling.

4. 'The Alexandra case'

– Conversation with prosecutor Ulrika Rogland

The case which has come to be known as the Alexandra case concerns a man who is suspected of having, over several years, enticed girls to agree to posing in front of a web cam, to take pornographic pictures of themselves and their friends and to have sex with him. With the help of the images found, the prosecutor has identified a large number of girls. She has questioned some 70 girls so far but is of the opinion that several hundred girls might have been involved during the suspect's time of activity. She has interviewed several of the girls a number of times. They are spread out over the whole country. According to Ulrika Rogland, it is possible to operate a rough three-part division of the girls. The first group consists of girls who, even when faced with images depicting them, are of the opinion that they are not concerned and that it is not them in the pictures. This, however, is a very small group consisting of only a few individuals. The second group covers roughly a third of the girls and these admit to having been a part of it but only of what the images show

and nothing else. They express no feelings, appear cut off; some in this group have experiences of previous abuse. The largest group of girls react with desperation and tears and express guilt over what they have been involved in. They are ashamed, regretful and think that it is disgusting. They do not know whether there are images posted online, no one has said anything about it, but several girls mention that the suspect filmed them.

Some girls state that they like the suspect, that they had fun friend-sex. The odd girl was in love with him and some feel sorry for him now that he has 'been caught.' Some girls express guilt over having accepted payment. They feel like 'whores.' Others feel tricked because they were not paid.

During questioning there was never a psychiatrically qualified person present. Ulrika Rogland has tried to pass on information regarding contacts for assistance and she knows that several girls are in contact with psychologists. In her experience, it is the slightly older girls for whom the experiences are a few years behind them who are the most willing to talk and relate, in comparison with the younger girls for whom the experiences are more recent.

Concluding, Ulrika Rogland reflects on that which characterises the group of girls she has questioned. She is of the opinion that many of them are doing well at school and that they appear to be well turned-out girls but that in almost all cases 'something is not quite right.' By this she means, for instance, a sick sibling, the death of someone close, a family suicide, an absent father or an 'inadequate' family.

5. BUP, Child Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic, in Huddinge

In order to compile useful experiences from a case concerning pornographic exploitation of children involving the production and online distribution of images of a large number of children, I contacted Eva Backström, social worker and psychotherapist at *BUP in Huddinge*. At this time Eva Backström and her colleague Mona Ol-Mårs were responsible for the administration of a large case at BUP in Huddinge.

Eva Backström says that the case concerned some 40 girls aged 11–12 who, during a number of years, had been photographed by a man who had then distributed the images online to a number of users. These image series depicting children in more or less sexually explicit positions as well as depictions of graphic abuse had been known for a long time to the police in a number of countries but the country of production had for a long time remained

unknown. A cause for concern was that as the images appeared online it became apparent that the same children became older and older. Consequently, it was a question of someone close to the children who had access to a group of children who he could abuse over a number of years.

It was discovered more or less by accident that the children were Swedish and living in a suburb south of Stockholm. One after the other the children were identified. Generally speaking, they were girls from the perpetrator's daughter's class. When the police had completed their intelligence gathering operations, they informed those responsible at child- and adult psychiatric services as well as social services that they were needed in a support capacity for a raid early Tuesday morning. The heads were told that it was a big operation and that a large number of children were concerned. In teams of three, these services were then represented at the three different police stations where children and parents were taken to be questioned at six a.m. one Tuesday morning. There the therapists were told that they were dealing with children who had been pornographically exploited online. The children were interviewed by the police and the parents had to wait outside. Neither staff from social nor from psychiatric services were allowed to be present at the interviews. The investigation lasted several months and involved a large number of police interviews with the abused children and their parents. Child psychiatry services formed crisis teams together with social and adult psychiatry services and made themselves available before and after interviews.

According to Eva Backström, the parents were shocked. They were not capable of digesting what had happened. They wanted to get to work and were concerned with having the children back in school as soon as possible. Eva Backström relates that no one had informed the school 'so there was the class teacher with a class full of boys.'

At the end of interviews, the teams introduced themselves both to the children and to the parents but at that time no one really expressed a need for assistance. According to Eva Backström, from a child's perspective things could perhaps have been done differently. The police rang the door at six a.m. and Eva Backström thinks that maybe it would have been helpful had there been a bit more time for preparation. A number of the children were called to repeated interviews and the teams were allowed into those. For this reason, social and psychiatric services wanted the names of the children called back to interview so that they could maintain continuity in the support through tying the same staff to each child.

Eva Backström describes the parents' reaction as a process. Feelings of rage and despair eventually replaced the initial shock and denial. These were well-

off parents in a calm suburb who were ambitious in bringing up their children – and now this! The parents were eventually divided into two groups: one for those who became part of the prosecution, and one for those who did not. It transpired that for some of the children, so much time had passed since the illegal pictures had been taken that prosecution was time-barred. The Swedish statute of limitations sets the time-bar at only five years for child pornography crimes.

As regards the children's reactions, many of them had no idea of what they had been through. Not only had the perpetrator been so manipulative that the children did not think that anything special was going on, but they were also too young to be able properly to interpret and to realise the importance of what they had been through. This however was not the case for the parents with the result that in reality they were the ones most in need of attention and support.

The teams from social and psychiatric services focused on this and discussed the need to be attentive to the children and their reactions with the parents. The therapists also discussed with them the fact that even if the children did not show any notable reactions now, it was very possible that they would after a while, even after several years, maybe upon entering puberty. Care was taken to point out to the parents that they must not place any blame on the children for having agreed to what had been done to them or for not mentioning it. Six of the children had suffered 'hands on'-abuse, i.e. the perpetrator had in different ways been in physical contact with them.

Child psychiatry services offered assistance to all children but no one was interested. It is my opinion that there are reasons for looking into this more carefully. Previous research in the field (Svedin & Back 2003) describes that out of a study group of 22 pornographically exploited children, 16 exhibited signs of psychological ill-health exceeding the Swedish average. The symptoms described in this study are varied: stinginess, bad mood, stubbornness, persistent demand for attention, cursing, daydreaming, clowning about, a lot of thoughts of sex. I have not had access to information on whether the children in the above described 'Huddinge case' exhibited signs of ill-health. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that assistance was universally rejected because the parents could not identify any symptoms in the children and that they therefore concluded that they did not need any treatment. As previously mentioned, it has transpired that the perpetrator was so manipulative that the significance of the abuse had not been understood by the abused children. In combination with their low age this may have been instrumental to the conclusion that there was no further need for treatment. Whether the conclusion would have been the same had a more systematic analysis been conducted

using the type of check-lists (CBCL², YSR³) used by Svedin & Back remains unanswered.

All in all Eva Backström is of the opinion that they were able to offer good crisis assistance. It was important to show themselves to the children, to introduce themselves and in that way prepare them for future contact. She also notes the importance of dealing with and deflecting the initial lynch-atmosphere which developed in the group of parents. She thinks the police could have provided the therapists with more information to allow them to prepare even better crisis assistance, especially from the point of view of the children, than merely being faced with a *fait accompli*.

This latter reasoning is emphasised by my discussions with Elsy Carleryd Franzén, psychologist and researcher⁴ who was tasked by the municipality to document and to analyse the treatment of this case. This compilation is now ready and will be published by the municipality of Huddinge.

Elsy Carleryd Franzén was in contact with half the parents involved. Without prejudice to her written conclusions, she is of the opinion that the parents were more upset than the children and that in a situation such as this attention should be focused on helping the parents in facing the children. She mentions the fathers in particular since it is to a large extent they who, in a situation such as this, are overcome by such rage that they are unable to see the needs of their children. Svedin & Back (2003) also describe this type of parental reaction. They are of the opinion that following the common initial feelings of disbelief, chaos and panic, mothers and fathers not infrequently divide. Anger and revenge were more prevalent among fathers while mothers could exhibit feelings and reactions possibly having to do with the perpetrator's tragic fate.

It seems important to ensure that parents are given support so that blind rage and revenge do not prevent them from seeing, interpreting and facing the abused child.

²Child Behaviour Check List

³Youth Self Report

⁴Telephone interview with Elsy Carleryd Franzén

6. Crisis Centre for Children and Young People, Save the Children, Stockholm

Crisis Centre for Children and Young People, operated by Save the Children treats children and adolescents who have suffered sexual abuse, who suffer from proximate experiences of war and flight, and grieving children.

Åsa Landberg, psychologist, has received a number of under-aged boys and girls while working within this framework who in addition to having suffered different kinds of sexual abuse have also been filmed/photographed in connection with this abuse. She says that 'nowadays, it is almost the rule. During the years that I have been working with this type of cases, it has become infinitely more common that the abuse is documented. In some cases there are judgements where child pornography offences are deemed proven but in most cases it is not known whether the images have been used, where they are, and whether they have been posted on the internet.'

The younger children tend not to be particularly preoccupied with the issue of the images but the older they get, the more they understand the significance of the documentation of the abuse, and the more worried they are because of it. The police are now more attentive to the issue of asking whether the perpetrator filmed/photographed the abuse.

In addition to cases where children have suffered the documentation and, in some cases, the posting of the images online, Save the Children's Centre is also visited by children and adolescents who have been subjected to severe bullying. Sometimes the bullying has distinctly sexual overtones and new technology is important in the unfolding of the events. It may be a case of children who suffer e-mail/SMS-bombing, i.e. the target receives a large number of e-mails and/or text messages with abusive content. This may also happen to adolescents via their own web sites if they have them. It also happens that adolescents in various ways pretend to be the person they want to bully and post degrading images of someone making it look as though it is the target who posted them her- or himself. This then leads to the target getting a bad reputation, having to clear her- or himself, etc. It also happens that 'geeky', racist or otherwise provocative opinions are posted online in the name of the target with the consequence that she or he is accused of having opinions that she or he in reality does not.

Åsa is of the opinion that in these situations, schools simply do not know what to do. Despite the fact that many schools are well aware of the issues, in many schools there are no established routines for how to deal with events of this kind. This might be a consequence of defective knowledge of the new technology and the way in which it has become part of young people's every-

day life and culture. For those with a history of this kind of abuse who visit Save the Children's Centre, it has often got out of hand: attempted suicides or refusals to attend school, for instance. Traditional bullying is a well-known phenomenon and even occurs in most schools with the result that there is knowledge of how to deal with it. The new technology offers completely different opportunities and can be that much more 'effective.' Åsa speculates that since the violations can be more or less open online, they might affect the target more.

In addition to these cases with a connection to new technology, Åsa Landberg has worked with some fifteen adolescents, mostly girls but also some boys, with 'internet pick-up issues.' These adolescents have met someone offline who they have been in contact with on a chat site which resulted in a frightening/uncomfortable/worrying experience for themselves and/or their surroundings. Well aware that she has met far too few to be able to pretend to any universability in this matter, in order to organise her own thinking Åsa Landberg has nevertheless divided the adolescents with this kind of issues that she has met into three groups.

The completely duped

These are adolescents who really thought they were about to meet someone who they had thought to be nice, a peer and with honest intentions. The meeting takes place after a longer or shorter period of contact via chats/telephone/text messages. When they actually meet up, they have been disappointed and scared when the person has turned out to be older and of a different sex from what he had said. A few have been raped or suffered attempted rapes while others have been offered payment for sexual favours. The adolescents generally think that this is disgusting, a person pretending to be someone he is not. These adolescents have truly been completely duped; victims of someone else's manipulations and preparations for abuse.

They had no idea this was about to happen. Åsa Landberg says that maybe these are naïve and innocent adolescents who could have used proper information on the actual risks.

Those pushing the boundaries

These are adolescents who are more active in putting themselves in situations they cannot quite control. For different reasons, they might not have a very secure social network, think that their male friends are too boisterous, rowdy and immature. These girls feels more 'mature' and more 'adult' and are therefore attracted by the more sophisticated and 'mature' attention they get from some adults who spend time on the adolescents' chat sites. These girls'

experiences from the contacts made are not uniformly negative. They may experience a mutually beneficial exchange despite the up to 40 year age difference. This group also includes those who have had uncomfortable and frightening experiences, who have been the victims of rape, abuse or threats. What they have in common is that they themselves have been active participants if not yet responsible. They have been more enterprising than the adolescents in the first group. These adolescents do not necessarily see themselves as having been abused. For them it is the calculating nature and the, in my view, deceitful manipulations of the older man which come to the fore, something the young girl is not always in a position to identify. Åsa Landberg says that for her, this naturally constitutes a dilemma for the purposes of treatment.

Åsa Landberg speculates on to what extent she should foist her own values of what is 'proper' and healthy onto a young girl. "In my treatment contacts I try to be open in this regard, the fact that I can see something that I do not feel that she sees, something about calculation and deceit, and that I do not quite know how to relate to it". She says that this is the most propitious avenue. "I do feel that at the end of such treatment, the girls seem somewhat more interested in friends their own age and understand somewhat more about the manipulations and the deceit they have suffered".

The self-destructive

These are young people who exhibit varying degrees of well-known signs of being at risk: substance abuse, eating disorders, neglect, a background of assault and abuse, bad schooling, self harm and poor self esteem. These adolescents have themselves offered sexual favours online against financial remuneration. They do not think it poses a problem were it not for the reactions of their surroundings. 'I both get laid and money', as a boy described it.

This is where, according to Åsa Landberg, that the new technology may be important. She is of the opinion that it might even be a case of it contributing to an increase in the commercial sexual exploitation of children that is observable in Sweden. When a young person actively offers sexual favours to a stranger against payment that has often been preceded by a sort of 'schooling' which has led to the displacement of frontiers and the lowering of thresholds. It is a 'step by step' process where the child cannot see that the whole forms a downward slope with evident risks of an unhealthy life. The internet allows the young person on her or his own, in a relatively safe environment at home by the computer, to take these steps. At least as regards the initial steps and thresholds, internet can constitute a real risk for these girls and boys. It could be described as a slide, straight to destruction, since it is so easy and offers so little resistance and real-life risks.

Åsa Landberg thinks that the immediate gains hide the obvious risks. The habituation and desensitisation needed in order to sell sexual favours they can do on their own. That is why it is so difficult to approach this as a therapist. They think they are smart and have found something that they value. They rarely seek help themselves and are not motivated for treatment. "They ask themselves what their alternatives are and I do not always have a good answer" says Åsa Landberg. The social as well as sexual quality of these relations is very low, even if the adolescents say otherwise. They do not have orgasms and do not seem to enjoy the sex. That which they enjoy is the appreciation and to be the centre of others' excitement and attention. The remuneration can also constitute a sort of seductive affirmation.

My comments

In all the teams I visited the thought was expressed that in some sections of youth culture there has been a shifting of the boundaries for what is considered normal, embarrassing, and unhealthy. In a time when nigh on all Swedish adolescents consume pornography, willingly or unwillingly, when reality TV stars 'have sex' on TV, when concepts such as fuck-buddy and friend-sex are non-dramatic aspects of the everyday life of adolescents and the private sex clips of celebrities are available online, maybe it is not such a big deal if there are images of me masturbating online.

In the framework of a larger multinational research project in the context of the cooperation in the Council of the Baltic Sea States, there was conducted a Swedish survey of close to 4,500 high school students aged around 18 on the experiences of pornography of Swedish youth.

The study⁵ showed that nearly all Swedish boys and girls have experiences of watching pornography, although boys to a larger extent than girls. 65 per cent of boys watch pornography at least once a month compared to 6,5 per cent of girls. Unlike the girls, the boys also think pornography exciting, that they are turned on and that they would like to try what they have seen. When the results of the study are discussed in terms of how girls and boys will eventually be affected by pornography, the authors ask this precise question: 'Will the norms change so that what was previously considered abnormal and forbidden becomes normal?'

37 per cent of boys belong to that little group of intense consumers of pornography, i.e. those who watch pornography once a week or every day, compared to 1,5 per cent of girls. 10 per cent of boys watch pornography in

⁵ *Mediarådet* [= Swedish Media Council] 2006 'Koll på Porr' [= Up to Speed with Porn]

principle every day. The boys in the group of intense consumers said that they suffered from worse mental health and were more depressed. They also exhibited socially deviant behaviour during their childhood. They had committed theft and abused drugs to a larger extent than the other boys in the data. It was also more common for the boys in this group to have committed sexually advanced acts towards others. The group of intense consumers, both boys and girls, were often from big cities and were more likely to come from single-parent households.

The authors also refer to other studies in the same field, e.g. Häggström-Nordin (2005). This survey showed that intense consumers lost their virginity sooner, and were more likely to have practiced anal sex and 'friend sex.' 71 per cent of the adolescents in this study thought that pornography affected sexual behaviour. 29 per cent thought it had affected them.

These results indicate that there could be a connection between intensive consumption of pornography and advanced risk taking in adolescents. Combined with a partly sexualised media output clearly addressed to young boys and girls, a cultural or at least a sub-cultural context is created which serves to legitimise the kind of risk taking which can lead to children and adolescents putting themselves in situations leading to them suffering ICT related violence.

In these circumstances, as therapists we need to be receptive and careful to differentiate between that which is our own anxiety and distress at immorality and shifting boundaries, and that which is motivated concern for the health and development of adolescents.

IV. Safe in cyberspace

Since a couple of years, Mats Andersson, through his company Netscan⁶, works with educating teachers at all levels, students and parents in issues concerning the internet habits of boys and girls. He puts significant emphasis on safety and risks in the chat culture which is increasingly pervasive in the everyday life of boys and girls.

His experience is that nigh on all girls and boys in Sweden have the possibility to communicate with others, known and unknown, from the moment they learn the basics on how to handle a computer. Brand new fora for socialisation and contact making have materialised in a very short time span bringing with them incredible possibilities for beneficial exchanges and exciting meetings. But they also bring with them all the risks associated with large and impossible to oversee fora for meeting people known and unknown. These are virtual fora where boys and girls go, almost always without the company, support or control of adults. They do not always want adults to be present since boys and girls of today are way ahead of the adult world as concerns the use of the latest technology: computers, telephones, cameras and gaming consoles can all be used to socialise online.

Lunarstorm is by far the largest youth site online. According to Mats Andersson they have an annual turnover of 50 million SEK and have 50 employees. 5 million text messages and 50,000 images pass through every day. Lunarstorm have 9 employees whose only task is safety. Other considerably smaller but much frequented sites are *Snyggast*, *Kamrat*, *Skunk*, *Hamsterpaj* and *Playahead*. These sites have slightly different focus, target groups and are more or less serious when it comes to safety concerns and corporate structure.

What they all have in common is that on virtually all of them there are men who contact adolescents considerably younger than they are for different purposes but often with a view to satisfy their own sexual needs. These adult attempts at contact may be very enterprising and ingenious: so-called grooming or 'preparations for abuse' can go on for a long time, slowly building up to and in some cases leading to a meeting offline. Sometimes these meetings lead to severe consequences for the young person such as deception and manipulation, rape, sexual abuse and assault.

⁶ Interview with Mats Andersson, Netscan

According to Mats Andersson, these attempts at contact are quite often no less camouflaged than offers of 'romantic photography', participation in 'modelling agencies' or escort businesses, participation in 'surveys' on sexual habits or 'sexual education', or of more or less fake exchanges focused on 'common' hobbies. It is not uncommon for these men to divulge their real age. During the time Mats Andersson has been active in this field he has been in touch with around 1,500 men who, thinking he was a '12 year old boy' or a '14 year old girl', gave him their correct name, phone number and address with a view to organising an offline meeting with more or less expressed sexual intentions. All this without any kind of invitation or encouragement.

'If I want to find out whether the person I'm chatting to is a girl my age or someone who's faking, I usually use the 'make-up trick.' It never fails. Old men and guys know nothing about make-up. So, for instance, if I say that I have found a conditioner which can be used as a foot moisturiser because it's much cheaper or a special kind of lip gloss that can be used as baseline if you dilute it with water to make it stick better, or whatever, I usually get a lot of question marks, or a comment that I'm nuts. But if it's an old man, he'll pretend to be interested or tell me that he also does that and then you know that he's not a girl.'

Told by a girl in junior high school

As the use of so-called web cams allowing users to see each other live while chatting spreads, it becomes increasingly common that young people contact each other for a bit of 'cyber sex', i.e. you watch each other live while you masturbate. Since this can be recorded those who engage in this run the risk of there being film clips of them in these most intimate circumstances which for the foreseeable future may be posted (sold) online.

V. RFSL

RFSL, [= The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (Swedish non-profit organisation)] is an association which promotes the interests of homo-, bi- and transsexual persons. RFSL was founded in 1959 and is one of the oldest organisations in the world of its kind. At the start of 2004, RFSL could boast 6,000 members.

Most of the activity on RFSL's chat site, *RFSL.chat.se*, has, according to Sören Andersson⁷, president of the RFSL, become increasingly focused on sex. The site is used to make sexual contacts offline. According to him, periodically there is a 'big problem' with boys under fifteen who are looking for older men because they are curious, 'horny' or want to make money. When it is a question of money, the boys are older. Mostly men visit the site. Sören Andersson has no personal experience of young people ending up in trouble as a result of contacts made on the RFSL chat site and consequently can give no information in this regard. The chat site is monitored by volunteers in order to stop illegalities and things with which they want no connection, such as prostitution, child pornography, bestiality, paedophile exchanges or drug trafficking.

Sören Andersson mentions that journalists working on a story sometimes access the site pretending to be paedophiles or children in order to see what happens. According to Sören Andersson this generally does more harm than good since after each such hyped story aiming to 'uncover' paedophile exchange or child prostitution on the RFSL chat, precisely such activity increases.

According to Sören Andersson, the site's largest problem is that paedophiles occasionally use it as a meeting place. He says that there is a filter which sets off an alarm when certain words or combinations of words are used in order to help prevent unwanted material and exchanges on the site.

⁷ Telephone interview with Sören Andersson, President of RFSL

VI. BRIS

BRIS, [=Children's Rights in Society] is a non-profit, party politically and religiously unaffiliated organisation helping children in need. The organisation is a link between children, adults and society. BRIS works to influence public opinion and decision makers and also to increase adults' respect for children as individuals.

The knowledge BRIS derives from phone calls and e-mail via the Children's Helpline and BRIS-mail is an important tool in the work to expose the needs of children to adults, the general public and decision makers.

I. Virtual bullying

From BRIS' yearly report⁸ over contacts with boys and girls calling and sending e-mails to them it transpires that an ever increasing part concerns 'new forms of harassment.'

According to BRIS, internet and mobile telephones have created new fora for bullying. The numbers state that during 2005 over 700 out of a total of almost 20,000 contacts with BRIS concerned IT related issues. Via e-mail, notes in guest books and images on web sites, comments on chat sites and text messages children and adolescents are sometimes subjected to more or less systematic harassment in a way which could be described as virtual bullying. The 2005 report give examples of how targets of such bullying describe it:

I don't know what to do there was a girl who wrote that i was ugly!! then i wrote that she was stupid. And she goes on adding me to msn and writing lots of mean stuff about me: mongoloid! cunt! Girl, 13

They wrote that i was like fat, slow and a bit 'developmentally challenged' and they posted my mobile number on the site where they wrote: 'Do you want to call a deranged idiot' and my mail address. Boy, 14

The girls in my class have written lots of dirty things to me on lunar like 'Fucking anal cunt' 'Fucking idiot' 'Geek' 'pee-wee' and 'i'm going to fucking bully you to death'... Girl, 12

⁸ The BRIS report – phone calls and e-mails to BRIS 2005

A couple of 'friends' at school spread around a picture of him when he was drunk and vomed at a party. Since then people call him lots of mean names and laugh at him. He's afraid his parents are going to find out.

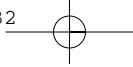
2. Destructive online contacts

The majority of girls and boys who contact BRIS to tell them about their experiences with the internet describe friendship, love and joy and that the internet has given them friends for life. During 2004, however, a distinct increase in what is referred to as 'destructive online contacts' was observed, i.e. boys and girls telling of how they have ended up in trouble in different ways, received threats, been followed, met people who have disappointed them, tricked them, made sexual advances, scared them and worried them. This negative trend has continued through 2005. A lot of the times an adolescent has had an online contact which seems trustworthy, for instance a boyfriend or an older person who in different ways makes out to help in a tough situation and who turns out to be deceitful and not at all who she or he made her- or himself out to be. In several cases the adolescents relate how they shared private thoughts and images of themselves with or without clothes, in ways which made them feel tricked and vulnerable.

Below is a selection of postings which have appeared on BRIS' discussion forum on these issues for children and adolescents. The postings have been marginally edited:

1. Hi all. I have made a very big mistake in my life, [...] A guy wrote to me on lunar and had recently moved in near me, [...] He wanted to meet some friends and stuff. So I was nice and wrote him back, then he asked for my msn [...] Of course I gave it to him, but after a while chatting we suddenly decided to meet. I met him this guy then, but everything turned out that he only wanted to sleep with me and I had never slept with anyone before him, stupidly I said yes to sex. After three days I never heard from him, he had only played with me. And my age and his age disgusting enough [...] I want to give it back to him for what he did to me, I noticed he played with all the girls he could get. What can I do so that the other girls don't fall for him ?!

2. 'i've met a guy on the internet. i was in a different school when we had a day off. after that when i got back home and went onto lunar i had a posting in my guestbook from a guy from the other school. he asked me for my msn and he got it. we decided to meet. so he came to my place, or , he took the train. We talked so much and i could simply be myself when i was with him. i guess i kinda fell for him. but then it



turned out that he had come to my place to meet my friend,so it was simply lucky that i hadnt fallen for him even more. but when i told my parents that there was a guy who was coming to my place , they wondered who he was of course.i said i had met him in that school,which i hadnt he'd only seen me.but we met a couple of times after that too.now we barely have any contact.'

3.'Hi! I'm a girl who's scared, or I think I am! Once I was on my msn and chatting to a girl who started writing stuff to me. I was hurt. But that was in fourth grade and now I'm in fifth! I wonder if it's normal to be scared of this stuff please respond!/CHICKEN?'

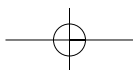
4.'I have a contact (guy friend) online too.We have never met or anything, it sucks because we love each other like H*LL! We live about 800 km from each other and we're meeting this summer (We know almost everything about each other and we have chatted for a year no) My mother doesn't like that we are meeting since he's muslim and I'm a christian... BUT SCREWTHAT!!! YOU LOVE HIM AND HE LOVES YOU... go for it babe !'

5.'I've got to know a guy online who's 5 years older than me and norwegian.We were meant to meet this week-end, but it never happened (I'm very annoyed with him now).We have been in touch for a year or so now, and he is really a charming guy, and goodlooking.I hope I get to meet him :) To tell the truth I've become a bit interested (I know, you can't online) And what if something were to happen between us? What should I say to my mom? She thinks everybody online are paedophiles. I'm of course bringing a friend when I meet him in town, so I don't think there's a big risk that I'll be raped or something.What shall I do?'

6.'Can relate very much :(finally i told him he was the biggest queer and stuff and we started fighting [...] i blocked him from msn and everything...he only calls me like once a year but never says anything, don't know why :S but it's nice that he's stopped caring about me.'

7.'my number. to a friend from a chat. now he calls me fairly often and i'm scared. is he who he says he is? he looks older in the black and white pictures and everything is like about me. then he tells me that he loves me, all of a sudden he gets angry with me. calls and bothers me like all the time. why did i do that, is a question i always ask myself. and its like impossible to say no. since always possible to convince me somehow.'

8.'similar happened to me... but I got biiiiiiig consequences..dont have to write it..you can ask if you want to know instead.. on my way to hell....'



VII. Internet as risk and as opportunity

In SOU [= Swedish Government Official Reports] 2004:71, *Sexual exploitation of children in Sweden*, there is a section which highlights the internet as a risk and as a possibility for the safety of children and adolescents. The author is of the opinion that the internet has brought with it radical changes in terms of girls' and boys' social and cultural environment. Children and adolescents spend much of their time in front of the computer in a world with risks and opportunities about which parents and other adults know very little.

The author refers to a project conducted by *Väldsskildringsrådet* [= Swedish Media Council], SAFT 2002–2003 (Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools). The SAFT-survey (2003) states that 23 per cent of children aged 9–12 have ended up on sites with pornographic material by mistake. Out of these, 20 percent wish that they had never seen what they saw. Fourteen per cent of parents thought that their children had come across pornographic material online. According to the author there is no real research into or knowledge about the reactions of children to this type of experience. It has been possible to show that they felt uneasy and wished that they had not seen what they saw.

The author also comments on a couple of the online meeting fora in existence. Lunarstorm which in 2003 had 1,4 million members and was visited by 350,000 members daily is by far the largest one. The anonymity offered to visitors to this type of contact site is, according to the author, attractive to anyone who is discovering her or his personality and getting to know her- or himself and her or his surroundings. In most cases, this is something positive and provides ample opportunities for confidence and contact, but it can also create risks. You can come across people who pretend to be someone they are not and who have hidden agendas.

32 per cent of the children in the SAFT-survey declared that someone had talked about sex to them without them wanting to. This had happened to more girls than boys and to 18 per cent it had happened more than five times. 24 per cent declared that they at some point had been threatened, frightened, bullied or humiliated by an online contact.

26 per cent of the children in the SAFT-survey had only occasionally met someone they had chatted to in person. 19 per cent had met more than five people. Half of the children had brought a friend to such a meeting, half had gone alone. For half the children the meetings had been fun. Around one per cent had met someone who had been mean to them or had wanted to hurt

them. Out of the parents, seven per cent thought their children had met someone in real life that they had become acquainted with online.

The author refers to a study by Wolak et al. (2003) which shows that compared to other girls, girls who form a close relationship with someone they have met online have a more conflictual relationship with their parents and have more problems (depression, bullying).

To give examples of the risks run by adolescents who use the internet in order to make contacts the authors mention a number of court cases in Sweden. These concern a total of twelve girls between the ages of eleven and 17 who have suffered different kinds of sexual abuse at the hands of men they had gotten to know online. The abuse has been more or less severe, girls have been involved in transactions akin to prostitution and there are cases of recording of pornographic material.

The author also comments on the very common activity among teenagers to post images of themselves and others on so-called 'pee-wee sites' such as *snyggast.se* [= *prettiest.se*] for others to vote and to grade who they think is the 'prettiest.' The trend would seem to be that the more naked and sexually audacious the image, the higher the score. The author feels that one of the risks associated with this is that representatives of the pornography industry may copy these images for use as advertisement to entice clients for e.g. internet-based phone sex services, sale of films and escort services. If a relatively 'innocent' image from a youth site is copied and posted on a pornographic site, the significance of the image changes and can then constitute a grave violation of the young person in the image.

Finally, the author discusses the need for additional knowledge of the field and the need for sensible information for parents, schools, internet companies and non-profit organisations in order to increase the safety for the girls and boys who are now using the internet. Much responsibility is placed with the internet service providers and it is thought that the best ways to combat the undesirable phenomena are influencing public opinion, knowledge and auto censure.

VIII. International experiences

I. The ECPAT International report: Violence against children in cyberspace

In this context 'cyberspace' signifies an imagined, virtually limitless space where unimaginable amounts of digitalised information is being communicated incessantly. Cyberspace as 'space' or 'place' does not exist but is in constant creation and definition by the communication which takes place in it. The almost philosophical question of whether 'cyberspace' is a more or less defined 'space unto itself' or is more appropriately thought of as a mirror reflecting 'normal reality', might be of importance to our understanding of the abuse and violations of children and adolescents which occur in this virtual space. As I see it, the answer is probably both rather than either-or. Cyberspace can of course be considered as a mirror or an area onto which all the wishes, fantasies and conditions of human conscience are projected, and this goes for young people's vulnerability as well as the manipulations of the perpetrator. In this sense, cyberspace is no different from 'normal reality', or, as it is known in this context, 'offline.' The abuse and violations which occur online are from the perspective of the abused just as real as the abuse which occurs offline. Children and adolescents become equally sad and despairing over the mean gossip and rumour spreading which occurs online as that which occurs in the school yard.

However, there may be reasons to conceive of cyberspace, or the world online, precisely as a 'space unto itself', a space with such particular characteristics that for some people it has the preconditions to be a more risky environment than traditional risk environments. It may provoke risk taking and for that reason may require special attention. Essentially, the characteristics of cyberspace are the anonymity, velocity and spatial freedom that it offers. Combined with the very advanced, effective and relatively user-friendly technology available and the special culture and codes which are developed in conjunction with it, cyberspace takes on special significance.

As a contribution to the continuing work of the UN to shed light on all the different areas where children are in need of protection from violence and

abuse, ECPAT International⁹ has compiled a report¹⁰ which discusses ICT related violence against children.

By way of introduction, it is stated that ICT related violence against children and adolescents is a new phenomenon which will affect increasing numbers of children and adolescents all over the world and that it is necessary to plan for increased security in these matters. The aim of the report is to draw attention to and to describe the ICT related risks run by boys and girls. It is an attempt to identify the possible harm consequent upon ICT related exploitation of children. It concludes by providing a number of recommendations for protecting children when in this environment.

The type of ICT related abuse the authors consider children risk suffering is divided into four categories.

1. Images of child abuse and exploitation

The report states that this is a part of the spectrum of ICT related abuse which tends to grow. There is no trustworthy data accurately describing the extent of this activity, the number of involved children, who these children are, their needs, background and future. Reference is made to the thousands of images logged in police databases of which around 400 have been identified. These are mostly instances of child abuse perpetrated and documented by someone close to the child, nowadays often with a profit motive. It is however not unheard of in this context that street children and children from orphanages in poorer countries are abused. The report also comments on the fact that the production and distribution of pornographic images of children and young people are based on the increasing use of web cams and cameras integrated in mobile telephones among children and adolescents. In these cases, girls and boys themselves produce and distribute images of themselves and others.

The reasoning around the possible harms caused to the abused children from this type of exposure is conducted in general terms and without reference to research. The authors are of the opinion that pornographically exploited children in essence exhibit the same kind of symptoms as children having suffered sexual abuse, i.e. the child's reaction will be determined by her or his age, the relationship to the perpetrator, previous trauma and deficiencies, type of abuse, degree of violence and threat. The symptoms exhibited by a

⁹ End Child Prostitution and Trafficking in Children. ECPAT is a global organisation composed of a coalition of organisations all combating the sexual exploitation of children.

¹⁰ ECPAT International. (2005) Violence against Children in Cyberspace. Bangkok, Thailand.

sexually abused child can appear together and in isolation. By way of example are mentioned depression, poor self esteem, anxiety, eating disorders, exhaustion, concentration difficulties, aggressive behaviour and unkempt rage. Feelings of guilt and lack of trust as well as borderlessness are also mentioned along with PTSD, pseudo-maturity, confusion of roles, self-harm and substance abuse. The additional aspect usually brought up in the context of pornographically abused children, the worry and shame that the abuse has been documented and for the foreseeable future will be available to others, is also mentioned.

According to the author, the fact that the children in the sexually abusive images posted online usually seem happy and smiling and seem to be enjoying themselves is a contributing factor to the child's feelings of shame in respect of what she or he has suffered. It is very likely that this is only part of the truth about how the child felt at the relevant time. We also know that some children are overcome with bad conscience because they have helped to trick other children into abusive situations. They may themselves have taken part in photographing themselves and others and even in spreading images online.

2. Grooming for harm

In internet chat rooms as well as in real life most boys and girls have an instinctive aversion to overly pushy and offensive attempts at contact, especially from someone much older. People who for various reasons want to come into contact with younger people for sexual purposes – their own sexual needs, the recording of pornographic films, escort services, prostitution, etc. – therefore have to develop more subtle strategies and techniques to win young people's trust. These attempts at contact can be very refined and manipulative, may continue over a long period of time and include a number of adolescents at the same time. To discover that you are being duped in this way constitutes, for a young person, a deceit from which it can be difficult to recover, even if it does not necessarily result in frightening encounters offline. One obvious way to discover and in time to abort this kind of grooming or preparations for abuse is for the service providers to monitor communications and to block anyone who turns out to have a hidden agenda. The ECPAT report draws attention to new trends within ICT which make this kind of monitoring more difficult. For example, adolescents seek out peer-to-peer networks to communicate via the transmission of files and instant messaging (IM) platforms which offer a more secluded environment and are more difficult to monitor.

In this respect it might be appropriate to consider the preventive campaigns conducted in various places aimed at increasing the awareness of children

and adolescents of how they should comport themselves online to minimise the risk of ending up in trouble. This advice is generally of the following kind:

- Do not give out your telephone number to someone you do not know
- Do not lie about your true age
- Do not trust the person you are chatting with to tell the truth

These avenues might be important and may cause the beginner or naïvely imprudent and impulsive person to think twice. But in the case of the adolescents who have decided that they want to make money by distributing images of themselves, who fantasise about heated encounters with strangers or who are curious and desirous to cross boundaries, a different type of guidance is necessary. Those who take the initiative and actively seek out more or less dangerous situations are not receptive to friendly advice about not giving out their e-mail address. We have not yet seen nor experimented with guidance for this type of risk behaviour. We need more knowledge about the concrete experiences, thoughts and feelings of adolescents concerning this type of risk behaviour in order to make progress.

3. Exposure to pornography and harmful materials

The report states that as a result of the spread of the Internet many children and adolescents run an increased risk of being both willingly and unwillingly exposed to images which may appear frightening, upsetting or confusing. We have very limited knowledge of how this affects children and adolescents. It is speculated that exposure to images with advanced sexual and violent content as a young person without the possibility to express feelings and thoughts around this material may be a contributing factor to youth violence.

Among other things, reference is made to an Australian study, Coleman (2003), where 90 per cent of 101 children under 10 who participated in a programme for children with sexual behavioural difficulties had been exposed to advanced sexual material online.

Thoughts are expressed that active exposure of children to pornographic images may be used by persons intending to abuse them in order to lower their inhibitions and make them more amenable. In a number of known cases of abuse of children, it has been established that the perpetrator had used pornographic images to 'groom' or otherwise prepare the child through 'sexualising' it.

4. Cyber bullying

Internet and mobile telephone related insults and bullying constitutes an increasing problem affecting increasing numbers of people. British and Amer-

ican studies indicate that between 25 and 40 per cent of all children and adolescents who regularly spend time online have experienced this kind of harassment. 20 per cent of children in an American study had received 'mean or threatening' e-mails or text messages.¹¹

Compared to 'traditional bullying' ICT related bullying is considered potentially more harmful. The target can easily be made to think that the violations have been made available to a much larger group of people than would otherwise be the case and the absence of voices, facial expressions and physical contact give the violations a more damaging, infernal and devastating character. The authors provide examples of children as well as adolescents who have committed suicide following this type of bullying.

2. Online victim

In a large telephone survey in the USA (Finkelhor, D et al.) 1,500 children aged between 10 and 17 were interviewed about their experiences of online victimization.

Online victimization was taken to comprise:

1. Sexual solicitations and approaches

Sexual approaches and/or solicitation, i.e. suggestions of sexual activities, 'sex talk', unwanted sexual information by an adult.

2. Aggressive sexual solicitation

This was taken to mean attempts at contact which were aimed at an offline connection with the perpetrator through letters, telephone or real personal encounters.

The results show that about one in five (19 per cent) had suffered unwanted sexual molestation during that year. Far from everybody had been disturbed by these events.

About five per cent of those who had suffered molestation declared that they had felt very frightened or upset. One in seven of the sexual molestations included attempts at offline contact.

¹¹ NCH. (2002) 1 in 4 children are the victims of 'online' bullying. UK: NCHI I. ECPAT International. (2005) Violence against Children in Cyberspace. Bangkok, Thailand.

About half of the aggressive as well as the non-aggressive attempts at contact and molestation online were perpetrated by other young persons, roughly two-thirds boys and young men. Considering the anonymity prevailing online these numbers are subject to caution since a number of the children surveyed were unable to state the sex or the age of the person who had bothered them.

According to the information provided by the persons surveyed, a common intention of this type of attempts at contact was a desire for so-called cybersex, i.e., a desire to divulge/share sexual fantasies in special chat rooms not infrequently including real or imagined undressing, real or imagined masturbation. In the more aggressive instances of molestation it might be a question of concrete proposals to meet offline, phone calls home, gifts and on one or two occasions even tickets for travel.

It transpired that in roughly half of these cases, the young person did not tell anyone about what had happened. When it came to the more aggressive incidents about a third (36 per cent) decided not to tell anyone.

75 per cent of those having suffered molestation (19 per cent of all surveyed) state that they were neither upset nor frightened as a result of these events. In 20 per cent of the cases, the adolescents declare that they were very upset, in 13 per cent that they were extremely scared. Out of those who had suffered the more aggressive incidents, 36 per cent declare that they were very upset and 25 that they were extremely frightened as a result of the incident. In 17 per cent of cases, the persons surveyed declare that they were extremely embarrassed.

The aggressive incidents caused the most difficulties to the surveyed. For instance, they declared that they

- stayed away from the internet
- could not stop thinking about the incident
- felt volatile and irritable
- stopped being interested in things they used to be interested in ('all the time' and more than 'a little bit').

At least one of these difficulties was present in 43 per cent of the incidents described. 17 per cent of the molested adolescents declared five or more symptoms of depression at the time of the interview. That is twice as many as compared to all the adolescents surveyed.

The report attempts to identify groups of adolescents who run the greatest risk to suffer sexual molestation online. The authors state that the risk is greatest for the oldest adolescents, those between the ages of 14 and 17, and that

girls run a greater risk than boys. The authors also state that those who present any kind of problems use the internet frequently and use computers outside of their home. They use chat rooms where they socialise with strangers, set aside safety when they are online and therefore run the greatest risks.

Examples of high risk behaviour are giving out one's address, telephone number or willingly to go onto sites with graphic pornographic content. Other examples are discussing sex online with strangers, participating in jokes and bullying directed at others and oneself making mean and provocative comments about others encountered online.

3. Unwanted exposure to sexual material

This is intended to mean incidents where girls and boys are unwillingly exposed to images of naked people or people engaged in sexual activities when they have performed internet searches, surfed, opened e-mails or followed links.

4. Harassment

Threatening or aggressive material sent to boys and girls, either privately or possible for others to see.

25 per cent of the boys and girls surveyed had experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic material on at least one occasion over the past year. In most cases (71 per cent) this happened while surfing. The other incidents (28 per cent) occurred as a result of opening e-mails or following links. Six per cent of those surveyed declared that they had experienced fear and distress in connection with these incidents.

3. Barnardo's study of 83 cases

Barnardo's is one of the United Kingdom's oldest and largest independent organisations helping and supporting children in need. Having started by mainly running orphanages, today Barnardo's works with economic support as well as qualified treatment directed at children and families in difficult circumstances. They also work globally with issues of children's rights, conduct research and teaching, run campaigns and lobby efforts directed at children's rights in roughly 130 different projects all over the United Kingdom.

During 2004 Barnardo's directed an inventory of current cases within the organisation where children had suffered in various ways via online contacts. A total of 83 cases were discovered (Palmer, T., Stacey, L., 2004). These were sorted under ten headings giving examples of the types of incident it was about.

1. Children who view adult pornography

It is well-known that children and adolescents who are subjected to so-called grooming, preparation for abuse by someone who has sexual intentions, are often introduced to more or less graphic pornographic material as a kind of customisation and sexual stimulation. The aim is to make them more amenable and desensitised to eventual discomfort or resistance. In these contexts pornographic images may be important in putting children and adolescents in situations where they risk abuse and violation.

The authors are of the opinion that as a result of the spread of the internet, children and adolescents of today have access to images of a pornographic character to an historically unparalleled extent. Previously, to satiate the curiosity always induced by sexual issues she or he who wanted to access such materials had actively to find it her- or himself. Today children and adolescents are inundated with graphic pornographic material, willingly as well as more or less unwillingly. The authors state that we today are unable to predict the effects of this. We know too little about how children and adolescents are affected long term by this type of exposure.

2. Children sold online for sexual abuse offline

According to Barnardo's it happens that children are offered up for sexual purposes on chat rooms or on virtual notice boards. They are not infrequently presented accompanied by a picture in home-like environments, the advertiser being other members of the family or friends of the child or the child's family. According to Barnardo's, this is an example of the connections between prostitution, 'pimping' and trafficking which are rendered possible and stimulated by the spread of the internet. The internet offers an easy tool to find both vulnerable children at risk and interested customers.

Natalie was 14 years old when she met Mat. He was much older and flattered her with gifts and attention... Eventually the girl's picture was posted on a web site which offered underage girls for sex... Natalie knew nothing of this web page or that her picture was on it.

– I didn't realise he was advertising me, I thought he loved me.

Eventually the police found this site and closed it down. Barnardo's offered to help the children. After a day or two, another site with new children for sale appeared...

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

3. Children abused through prostitution using the internet and mobile phones to contact their abusers

There is a group of underage girls and boys who actively seek out men prepared to pay for sexual favours in chat rooms and via mobile phones. According to Barnardo's, child prostitution was always more hidden than other forms of prostitution and was rarely open 'in the street.' With the coming of the internet and the generalised use of mobile telephones it has become even more hidden (Or increasingly open, it is very visible if you look for it online).

Young people involved in this type of prostitution do not view themselves as being abused, despite the fact that they, according to Barnardo's, often have experiences in life which render them particularly vulnerable.

Lee was 12 when he escaped from home the first time. His home was violent and he felt safer in the street. He started to visit internet cafés which were open 24/7. There he met a group of boys who used the internet to contact 'johns' who offered them money for sexual favours. In the warmth of the internet café, Lee found safety together with this group of boys.

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

4. Adults or young people who engage in 'cyber-sex' with children

This kind of sexual exploitation involves convincing children to participate in imagined or real sexual activities online where the perpetrator uses the child to satisfy sexual needs and fantasies through sex talk and masturbation.

5. Young people who place images of other young people online

To post images of each other in inappropriate internet settings has been shown to be a way to tease, embarrass, bully, joke or avenge which has become increasingly common among young people and which can have devastating effects for the target.

6. Children of adults who download or distribute sexually abusive images of children

Barnardo's is of the opinion that there is cause to draw attention to those children who are present in the immediate environment where an adult downloads and/or distributes abusive images of children. They think that there are established connections between downloading, distributing and producing

abusive images of children and that it constitutes an increased risk for children in the immediate vicinity. Barnardo's is of the opinion that knowledge of these connections is lacking and the authors call for research into for instance how family structures, partners and children are affected in connection with the discovery that a member of the family is downloading/distributing abusive images of children.

7. Children who download sexually abusive images of children

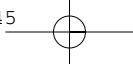
This is the second largest group in the Barnardo's survey. Judging by their experience, there are often complex antecedents to the behaviour of these adolescents. Even if it happens that they on their own initiative download the images, it is not uncommon that they were forced in one way or another by friends or by an adult, as part of a preparation for abuse, so-called grooming.

Dan was 16 when he was arrested for having taken abusive pictures of children. The police confiscated his computer and found many abusive images of children. Dan's difficulties had started when he began to use chat rooms and became friends with an older man. The man had started to send abusive images of children which Dan admitted to not thinking that 'revolting.' Gradually Dan began himself to download more abusive images and started to think that maybe he himself would enjoy taking such pictures of children. During this time, Dan made friends who were much younger than he was. They were the ones he took rude pictures of, tricking them that it was 'part of the game' they were playing, and which he proceeded to post online.

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

8. Children groomed online for sexual abuse offline

Barnardo's has worked with fifteen children who have been subjected to online contacts and then prepared for a meeting offline with the intention of sexually assaulting them. A few have suffered severe trauma after having met their chat friend in real life. For example, the report describes a case where two young people met their 'friend' and were abducted and brought to another part of the United Kingdom where they were kept in an apartment to be sold for sexual purposes.



Kelly had been caught up in the social services system since she was nine. When she was fourteen she had started drinking and engaging in self-harm. Together with fifteen-year-old Pat she hanged out at the local internet café. That is how they met Pete, in an internet chatroom. He made himself out to be their age and seemed to them to be nice and fun. After a while they decided to meet up. Pat and Kelly were shocked when they discovered that Pete was at least 35 but they let him offer them drinks and they went with him to a hotel to party. When the girls had become drunk, he abused them sexually. Afterwards, the girls felt scared and guilty of what they had been through and they were assisted by Barnardo's to work through what had happened.

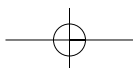
From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

William was a twelve-year-old boy living with his mother and sisters. He was bullied at school, alone and isolated. William started visiting a chat room where he came into contact with a brother and sister, 16 and fourteen years' old. During two, three months he told his mother about his chat friends and how close a friend he had become, especially with the girl. During the summer holidays, his mother suggested that they invite the girl to their country house and they sent her an e-mail. They decided to meet in a café. William was shocked when it turned out that his chat friend was a grown man in his forties. Embarrassed and terrified William was taken to a toilet where the man abused him.

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

9. Children sold online for live sexual abuse online

This is a kind of internet related abuse which entails the perpetrator notifying interested individuals that they at a certain time at a certain web address and via web cam may see, in realtime, abuse in progress. Those wishing to observe sometimes have to provide some kind of payment: money, drugs or other abusive images. Barnardo's has been in touch with children who have suffered abuse in the home of the perpetrator later to discover that the abuse had been filmed and distributed online in exchange for payment. According to Barnardo's there is evidence that even very young children suffer this kind of abuse, not infrequently by adults close to them, family members, friends of



the family, or other adults they have trusted such as teachers and counsellors. The report does not state how common this kind of abuse is, only that it does occur and that through its activities Barnardo's has come into contact with such cases.

Gina, thirteen, made contact with a thirteen-year-old boy in a chat room. They e-mailed each other for several weeks before they decided to meet. Gina brought a friend. When the girls met the thirteen-year-old boy it turned out to be a 25-year-old man. He offered them alcohol and the girls became drunk. He offered them money and convinced them to participate in sexual activities. Afterwards the girls saw a flashing red light and realised that they had been filmed by a web cam and that everything had been broadcast online. They were shocked but were too frightened to ask what had happened to the images. Barnardo's assisted them but they have to go on living knowing that the images will always remain.

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

10. Children made the subjects of child abusive images

These children constituted the largest group in Barnardo's compilation. The author of the report is of the opinion that there is evidence that this group is growing. Reference is made to the constantly increasing share of newly discovered abusive images of children which has been observed over the last couple of years. Barnardo's is concerned by the fact that the children in this group are ever younger and that the pictures often have been taken in home-like settings.

In Barnardo's experience, the perpetrators use several manipulation strategies in order to prevent the children from divulging what they have been through.

- they are shown abusive images of other children to 'normalise' the sexual activities they are made to suffer
- the perpetrator lets the child see images of itself being abused
- the children are encouraged to post images of themselves online
- the children are encouraged to involve friends in the production and distribution of abusive images
- the children are encouraged to be active in the abuse of themselves and other children.

In this way, according to Barnardo's, the children subjected to internet related abuse are turned into active participants, in addition to the shame and silence which afflicts all children subjected to abuse. They are made to believe that they are responsible for what they are subjected to and in some cases also for the online distribution; a very effective technique to silence the children. As concerns the slightly older children they are in addition sometimes told that they were old enough to say no and to quit which also serves to settle the children with the responsibility and contributes to their silence about what they have been subjected to.

Pete was thirteen when he came into contact with Barnardo's. He lived in an orphanage, was sexually confused, used light drugs and practiced self-harm and suffered from poor self esteem. He had met Terrence, a 30-year-old lawyer who made him feel appreciated and important. Terrence told Pete that he was very ill which made Pete feel sorry for and even more attached to him. However, this was part of the grooming process which Terrence was subjecting Pete to and which made him easier to manipulate. Pete was introduced to one of Terrence's acquaintances who offered to pay Pete if he could take pictures of him. The pictures became increasingly erotic and Pete became increasingly confused and frightened. Eventually it dawned on him that the images were sold online. Pete was shocked and now lives with the constant anxiety that the images will surface.

From: Palmer, T., Stacey (2004) Just one Click

IX. Summary discussion

I. Collected experiences

The issues were not unknown to any of the professionals I had the opportunity to interview. All the teams interviewed had some experience of children and adolescents who had ended up in trouble in different ways related to the new technologies. In some cases therapists had been involved in cases which had received nation-wide attention involving serial abuse of several children. With a few exceptions, the people I met were of the opinion that the cases were not sorted under any kind of heading. This had in their view to do with the internet or the new technology as such. There was not a collection of data on 'internet related violations' or similar matters. This was rather seen as an additional aspect of the issue of sexual abuse of children and adolescents of which the teams had been well-aware for a long time.

This leads to a lack of detailed information on how many internet related cases they have encountered. Those I met had not received any significant training or systematic methodology development focused on internet related violations of children and adolescents. A couple of teams had listened to Mats Andersson's lectures and there were plans for theme nights focused on the risks and possibilities of the new technology.

My overall impression is that the professional therapists I met generally seem fairly dazed and unknowing but interested and curious. They have carefully started to look around and understood that something new is happening. 'Maybe we should be more systematic in asking about these things.' There are no plans to exchange experiences of internet related violations and only a few of those I met had read any of the sparse literature yet in existence.

The unanimous opinion is that there is a significant presence of adult men on the adolescents' chat sites who seek contact with boys and girls for sexual purposes. It is a short step to consider the legal aspects of the phenomenon we refer to as 'grooming.' The English verb 'to groom' has several meanings: to care for, to trim, to beautify, to train, to prepare, to tune. In this report I have read 'grooming' as being synonymous with 'preparation for abuse', *inter alia* to underline the unreasonable state of affairs that who indulges in this does not commit a crime under the law. In the United Kingdom legislation was passed which regulates 'grooming for sexual purposes'

*“this Bill will strengthen the law further to ensure that predatory sex offenders who contact a child, whether on the Internet or otherwise and then meet or travel to meet the child, with the intention of committing a sexual assault can be prosecuted”.*¹⁷

2. Evaluation of whether there is violation and abuse related to new technology

How do experienced therapists proceed to determine whether the young person has been subjected to abuse or violations related to new technology? In truth, they do nothing in particular. Increasingly but to varying degrees one has started to ask adolescents about their internet habits. The presence of the camera and images in the everyday life of adolescents is increasingly brought up in the meetings. I have the impression that more concrete questions about how adolescents think and plan when it comes to internet behaviour are not systematically asked. The investigation of an eventual risk behaviour online is therefore not part of the conversations. My impression is that this is partly due to the relative ignorance and lack of interest of the treating staff when it comes to the risks and possibilities associated with the new technology. As therapists we have learnt to recognise adolescents with a propensity for destructive hyperactivity or seclusion. When it comes to adolescents with a propensity to suffer ICT related abuse we do not yet have the same regard. Possibly, these adolescents are in some respects different from traditional adolescents at risk. Some of them appear to be high achieving, inventive and able high school children, characteristics we therapists are not used to in adolescents at risk. We do not quite understand what it is that signals an increased risk to end up in trouble for this group and we need to increase our knowledge in order to learn which signals to look out for. Here there is cause to consider sex differences: Should we direct our attention at groups of girls rather than boys in this regard?

3. Do boys and girls with experiences of ICT related violations constitute a particular group?

In my opinion there is something to be gained from the person responsible for supporting a young person going through a crisis having cultural com-

¹⁷ From Scottish Executive News, Briefing new Bills for 2004-2005 session, Tuesday September 7, 2004

petence. A therapist specialised in children and adolescents should be versed in the environments and culture prevailing where adolescents meet and make connections. It is good to know about language and codes with respect to music, social atmosphere, fashion and different groups. It is my impression that both the youth culture and language are unknown to many adults, including therapists specialising in children and adolescents. As a therapist, to work with children and adolescents involves some listening and understanding how conflicts, events and processes develop in the framework of the everyday life the adolescents must relate to. These days, this everyday life increasingly takes place on chat sites in cyberspace where communication is conducted using new words and expressions, new phenomena, new symbols and new codes. A particular language is being developed particularly adapted to these lightning quick exchanges. Therapists specialising in children and adolescents must be versed also in cyberspace since their work is about helping adolescents to understand what it is they are involved in and to what extent they themselves contribute to their difficulties. It is akin to assisting adolescents to understand communication which they themselves sometimes have difficulties surveying. The everyday work of the therapist specialised in children and adolescents is about helping the young person to understand and better to deal with inner and outer conflicts through analysing and understanding conflictual events and messy communication together with the young person. The adolescent often has confused or incomplete recollections of what it is that has happened and why, what is someone else's fault or, alternatively, to her or his credit, and what the adolescent contributed to her- or himself. Together with the young person, the therapist tries to discover how conflictual situations can be dealt with in a more purposive manner and how to express, respectively, wants and desires, and unwillingness and aversion. How to approach this is determined both by the patient and the therapist, their talent, special skills and interests.

Many therapists specialising in children and adolescents prefer listening to thoughts and feelings in a real, offline environment rather than together with the young person reflecting over what happens in cyberspace. I am guessing that as a therapist specialising in children in adolescents thus far one has spent more time with one's patients going through thoughts and feelings around letters, drawings, diaries, poems, prose, films and images. It is certainly more common than spending an hour of therapy online in front of a computer in order to go through and to try to understand what it is that goes on in the different youth chat sites. I imagine that from now on we need to spend an increasing amount of time going through print-outs of chat messages and image material. All this in order to understand, along with our young clients,

what it was that happened and how the adolescent can avoid it happening again. This type of material has started to appear in my own clinical activity and provides partly new perspectives to the in therapeutic contexts well-known issues surrounding 'who really said what to whom.'

The material often associated with ICT related conflicts, violations and abuses has two aspects: One aspect is devastating: what once has been distributed remains and can be copied indefinitely. The second aspect concerns the fact that we as therapists, should we seize the opportunity, can view the material. If we deem it valuable we are able in that way to discover more about what it is that happened and thereby to assist the patient in making reality real and possible to deal with.

When the issue of ICT related abuse has been discussed by therapists, it has mostly centred on the fact that images distributed online remain for ever and thereby prevents healing in the affected child. Some therapists went as far as to say that in their opinion the child must never under any circumstances be told that images of the abuse were available since this would prevent any possibility of rehabilitation. (Carr, J. 2001).

Legal considerations may be necessary in the context of the child's right to justice: the right to damages, denomination of offences, statutes of limitation, etc. Such considerations may need to start from those cases where even voluntarily posted images were used inappropriately.

4. Risk behaviour online and offline

The adolescents who risk ending up in trouble via the internet, are they the same adolescents who risk ending up in trouble in other contexts? Nothing in the material really allows for a thorough answer. My thoughts are therefore hypothetical. One group of adolescents can be seen as 'self-harming' with 'internet pick-up issues.' In this case, the issues are such that therapists recognise and can identify the children and adolescents at risk. On the other hand, as concerns the group described as 'boundary crossing', the evaluation is probably more difficult. These may be adolescents who are not really at risk but who nevertheless risk ending up in trouble. Young people whose boundary crossing behaviour is only apparent in front of the computer are naturally not as easy to recognise as those who live dangerously IRL (in real life, i.e. offline). Several of the therapists interviewed had started to see that in the group of children who risk ending up in trouble, there are adolescents who live an outwardly ordered life. They do well in school, are adventurous and attractive which is also confirmed by other contacts in the framework of this

project. In this context, internet offers a risky environment to make contacts. These contacts can turn out to be difficult to control for the adolescent in search of identity and life style.

That which the adolescent sees as exciting may be based in an idealisation of the adult world followed by pseudo mature or precocious attempts to solve problems. Even if the adolescent sees it as her or his surrounding's problem and she or he lacks motivation for treatment, this is something which needs to be professionally tackled and knowledge and competence need to be developed.

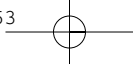
For instance, what should be the focus of the treatment and the therapeutic point of departure when an adolescent wants to defend and legitimise a romantic relationship sometimes involving an age-gap of 30–40 years? This needs to be understood from the point of view of the adolescent but also from the point of view of the specific characteristic which the internet seems to confer on relationships: a strength and intensity coupled with an experience for the adolescent for the first time really to be her- or himself.

Young people also use the internet in order to view themselves and aspects of their personality which they may consider deviant or 'dark.' This is where the internet can be described as a kind of 'slope' where the final step is vulnerability and exploitation. Such more or less subconscious 'slopes' or gradual processes are well-known for practitioners working with people with compulsive and risk behaviour issues. Experimenting and the seeking out of boundaries in front of a keyboard and a computer screen is not associated with traditional, immediate physical threat where warning signals sound. On the contrary, this seeking can take place in some sort of 'security' where the adolescent is made to run risks which, contrary to what would be the case in real life, cannot be foreseen. It is not a question of getting dressed and catching the bus, but merely pressing a button.

It is as a result of these presses of the button that steps are taken down the slope where it is impossible to see the continuation or the end. Even the journey to increased risks often remains hidden. Keeping in mind that such processes are highly individually specific rather than general and universal and without making any claim to having discovered the correct order of these steps, imagined steps down such a 'slope' could be described as follows.

1. Handing out personal information

The items of information which can be risky to divulge are of course name/pet-name, password, telephone numbers, addresses, social security number, information on which school/class one is in, what one looks like, information on friends, boy-/girlfriends, particular secrets and confidences which can later be revealed and passed on.



2. Sex chatting with strangers

By 'sex chatting' is meant the sharing with strangers of sexual fantasies, information of sexual habits and preferences and participation in so-called cybersex where you describe real or invented/imagined ongoing sexual activities.

3. Posting 'sexy' images of oneself and friends

A lot of adolescents take more or less undressed pictures of themselves and friends which they find it interesting to post and have evaluated. When, in addition, such images are sent to known and unknown people, are used by the pornography industry or for bullying purposes, those targeted can end up as outsiders and be marginalised in a way which sets the scene for continued risk behaviour. Since they are themselves active participants they may find it easy to blame themselves for what is happening to them.

4. Participation in web cam sex with strangers

This means that one or both parties get undressed and show themselves wholly or partly naked in real time before a web cam connected to the computer while masturbating. It is entirely possible for whom so wishes to download and record what they see and hear via the web cam without letting the person at the other end knowing about it or being able to abort such recording.

5. Offline dating

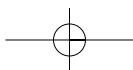
A lot of adolescents end up meeting someone offline, in most cases a peer, who they got to know online without anything bad happening. What seems to constitute risk behaviour in this context is going to such meetings without anyone knowing about it; without, for instance, bringing a friend and to do it at several occasions and relatively immediately following the initial chat without having made sure who one is about to meet and what their intentions are.

6. Offline dating with adults

There is of course no intrinsic reason why one young person and one considerably older person could not have a mutually enriching relationship involving friendship as well as romance and sex. However, in this context and from the relatively sparse material at our disposal, it would seem that very young people who make sexual contact with considerably older individuals after an initial online encounter run an increased risk of ending up in trouble.

7. Distributing images in exchange for remuneration

When offers/demands for remuneration become part of the agreements made online a significant boundary is crossed. In my opinion, this entails the



definitive lowering of a threshold for accelerated risk behaviour which there is reason to keep a close eye on. To take pictures of oneself or of friends for which you are then paid can give the adolescents a false sense of being in control of the situation and in a position themselves to make the decision. The remuneration in question may be the crediting of pay-as-you-go cards, which can be made over the mobile telephone, cinema tickets or cash which can be transferred in various ways.

8. Posing/web cam sex in exchange for remuneration

When the adolescent has descended the 'slope' so far as to engage in web cam posing in exchange for remuneration, the activity has taken on a more expressly commercial character. The adolescent will not show her or his face on camera and will have different tariffs depending on the length and nature of the posing.

9. Offline dating and agreeing to sex in exchange for remuneration

It is easy to imagine that for the adolescents who are in this way bribed/threatened/persuaded to agree to sex in exchange for different kinds of remuneration, this 'step' constitutes preparation for traditional prostitution.

10. Offering sex offline and online in exchange for remuneration

This constitutes traditional prostitution. Web sites offer sexual services according to a set tariff with possibilities for both virtual as well as real sexual contact.

We need more knowledge about this kind of 'slope', not least from those children and adolescents with own experiences, in order to be able to provide timely help and support.

5. Children and adolescents about the risks of the internet

There are a limited number of systematic compilations of Swedish data on what the stories and reflections of adolescents around the risks of the internet look like. One example is the study conducted by the Swedish Media Council from 2003 called '*The private life of children online.*' One thousand Swedish children aged nine to 16 were asked which personal information they would be prepared to give out online if, for instance, they had the prospect of winning a prize draw. 30 per cent of the thirteen to 16-year-olds would give out

their home address and 43 per cent would give out their full name. Twelve to thirteen per cent would send a picture of themselves.

Out of the 78 per cent who had chatted online, between 30 and 50 per cent stated that they had occasionally been untruthful about their sex, age or looks. It turned out that teenagers pretended more than the younger children. The girls pretend/lie about their name, their age and their looks while the boys mainly lie about what they can do. 46 per cent stated that they had met someone for real whom they had previously only chatted online with. 19 per cent had met more than five people this way. The children bring a friend with them in roughly half of these cases. The children go to these meetings alone in three per cent of the cases. Roughly half of these meetings were 'fun.' In four per cent of the cases, the children stated that the person they met 'said mean things to me' or 'tried to hit me and to hurt me.' When asked whether it had happened to them that someone they had chatted with online who had said that she or he was a peer had then turned out to be an adult, fifteen per cent of the children stated that it had. Combined with what the study showed about the relative ignorance of the children's parents as to their children's doings online, these results indicate that the vulnerability and the propensity to run risks of Swedish children are not inconsiderable. Many children risk ending up in unforeseen situations which they may find difficult to handle and there are sufficient numbers of them for there to be reason further to strengthen our capacity to assist children and adolescents with sufficient prevention and, additionally, competent support.

In conjunction with this project, a query for discussion was posted on the BRIS chat site for those adolescents who visited it during a three-week period. The question concerned bad experiences online. During the period that the question was posted, almost 80 responses were logged. The adolescents' overall experience of contacts made online was positive. However, some related stories of disappointment, fear and threats. In several cases these were stories of infatuations born online and those adolescents wanted advise and support about how to proceed. What were they to tell their parents? Should you proceed and meet for real? Most of the comments contained pieces of advise and remarks to those who presented this lack of resolve in the face of contacts made online.

For those who want to increase their knowledge about how children and adolescents formulate themselves and about what the digital version of today's youth culture looks like, this type of material is of course very valuable. However, for a deeper understanding this type of material needs to be complemented by observations from longer term contacts with children and adolescents active in this area.

6. Treatment efforts

Which type of effort/starting points/treatment is particularly suitable for children and adolescents with this type of experience? I get the impression that professional therapists have so far approached adolescents with experiences of internet related violations and abuse from a starting point generally applicable to children and adolescents with abuse issues. In the field, the questions outnumber the answers. Professionals I met call for practical guidance regarding pornographically exploited underage children where image recordings exist online. Therapists want to feel more secure in how and when to inform the children, how image recordings in various formats are to be treated and logged. Who is to have access to these recordings is another crucial issue in such cases. Practical experience is called for concerning how to deal with this over time and how to follow it up as the children grow older. Is the child's own position to be deciding or should the therapist her- or himself initiate follow-up?

When it comes to attitude and treatment therapists think and act on three levels:

1. General efforts concerning the internet and ICT globally containing information, 'lifeskill' – training, peer-to-peer – activities directed towards all children and adolescents, and basic information and training for parents and professionals. Such a wide starting point is of course motivated by the simple fact that all are susceptible to 'ending up in trouble online.'
2. Targeted efforts directed at adolescents exhibiting risk behaviour: Young people who are very active and post images of themselves. Those who date their online contacts offline and those who themselves participate in harassing others, as well as those who begin sexual relations where there is a considerable age gap. This group can be placed somewhere on the 'slope' where there in future might be question of offering sexual services for payment.
3. Support and treatment for children and adolescents with specific experiences of internet related violations need to be developed. From the experience described to date it would seem that at least as concerns the group displaying self-destructive behaviour there often is no subjective feeling of needing support, assistance or treatment. In these cases it is obvious that the adolescent her- or himself has been active and taken the initiative which is why condemnation and distancing are common reactions from the imme-

diate surroundings. This has to be dealt with in treatment. This constitutes a clinical challenge of a different kind than what is the case in relation to the 'duped' group who see a therapist following deceit and traumatic experiences.

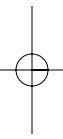
7. Future tasks

In several places in this report there is reference to the need for collected knowledge, increased diffusion of experiences and the significant lack of documentation. Nor are young people's experiences of abuse in ICT settings collected. A temporary social worker at *BUP Elefanten* in Linköping will, through the support from World Childhood Foundation, collect experiences that exist in the country. The project includes finding out how to assist children and adolescents with own experiences of ICT related abuse. Treatment teams in various places in the country who discover that they are visited by increasing numbers of young people with experiences of violence and abuse through contacts made online or other ICT related environments will be invited to participate in this knowledge development exercise. It is important to combine the existing knowledge about support and rehabilitation of children and adolescents who have suffered abuse, with the new international knowledge concerning the qualitatively different environment that the Internet and ICT constitute. In this way the project aims to provide professionals working to support children with new and better tools and methods to protect children from abuse and to offer suitable and correct treatment to those who have ended up in trouble.

Increasingly we are informed that violation, abuse, bullying and harassment of children and adolescents are not infrequently related to new technologies such as mobile telephones, digital cameras and computers. Children and adolescents, parents, therapists and other professionals in the education field, and professionals working with children need to be informed of the experiences which are beginning to be extracted in this field. This report focuses on these issues.

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Increasingly it is reported that violations, abuse, bullying and harassments of children and adolescents are connected to the new technology used in mobile phones, digital cameras and computers. Children, young people and parents as well as therapists and other professionals working with children need to be aware of the collected experiences that have evolved in this field. This report illuminates these issues



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