



CHILD ABUSE & INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) January 2011

1.1 The internet has, in particular, become a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of children. Internet chat rooms, discussion forums and bulletin boards are used as a means of contacting children with a view to grooming them for inappropriate or abusive relationships, which may include requests to make and transmit pornographic images of themselves, or to perform sexual acts live in front of a webcam. Contacts made initially in a chat room are likely to be carried on via email, instant messaging services, mobile phone or text messaging. There is also growing cause for concern about the exposure of children to inappropriate material via interactive communication technology – for example, adult pornography and/or extreme forms of obscene material. Allowing or encouraging a child to view such material may warrant further enquiry. Children themselves can engage in text bullying and use mobile phone cameras to capture violent assaults of other children for circulation.

1.2 Where there is evidence of a child using ICT excessively, this may be a cause for concern more generally about the child's welfare or development in the sense that it may inhibit the development of real-world social relationships or become a factor contributing to obesity.

1.3 There is some evidence that people found in possession of indecent photographs/ pseudo photographs of children are likely to be involved directly in child abuse. Thus, when somebody is discovered to have placed or accessed such material on the internet the police should normally consider the likelihood that the individual is involved in the active abuse of children. In particular, the individual's access to children should be established, within the family, employment contexts and in other settings (for example, work with children as a volunteer or in other positions of trust). If there are particular concerns about one or more specific children it may be necessary to undertake, in accordance with the guidance set out in Chapter 5, section 47 enquiries (see the Memorandum of Understanding with the police for the appropriate notification to the Internet Watch Foundation of concerns about possible child pornography and other illegal materials on the internet).