

AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE TO COUNTER
CHILD EXPLOITATION



AFP
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

COVID-19 and the risk to children
and young people online

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA KIT

APRIL 2020



accce.gov.au



thinkuknow.org.au



afp.gov.au

INTRODUCTION

This kit is intended to guide media and social media messaging about law enforcement's response to online child sexual exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide guidance on key messages and terminology.

WHAT IS IN THIS KIT?

- > How to talk about online child sexual exploitation
- > Key messages
- > Social media resources
- > About the AFP, ACCCE, ThinkUKnow & key contacts

Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children and young people are likely to be spending more time online, including using apps and games to pass the time, connect with friends and family and learn. This may result in children and young people being at a higher risk of being targeted by online child sex offenders, highlighting the importance of parents and carers understanding the challenges their children may face online.

Messaging, such as through media articles and social media accounts from trusted institutions and outlets, is critical to raising awareness and empowering the Australian community to assist law enforcement and child protection stakeholders collectively and collaboratively to prevent, disrupt and pursue online child sexual exploitation.

In raising awareness of online child sexual exploitation, it is also important to provide prevention messaging and solutions for parents and carers to highlight what they can do to contribute to solving the issue and to keep their children safe.

Online child sexual exploitation is when an individual (adult, or another child) or group uses technology or the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child, including the production and sharing of child sexual abuse material online. It can occur in many forms, such as online grooming, coercion and extortion and self-generated content.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

ACCCE market research identified a number of key learnings to maximise the effectiveness of messaging about online child sexual exploitation to maximise positive engagement and action.

Messaging should:

- > Frame the problem as a whole-of-community issue (e.g. "everyone in a young person's life has a responsibility")
- > Emphasise that children and young people need education, guidance and support from adults to stay safe online
- > Include clear and tangible advice to demonstrate that addressing the issues is achievable
- > Adopt a measured and supportive tone
- > Use language that is 'pro-technology'
- > Explain where to go for help and support as well as how and where to report issues or concerns.

Preferred terminology

✗ *Child Pornography*

✓ *Child Abuse Material*

? “Child Pornography” is inconsistent with legislation, as it is classed as “Child abuse material” under new Commonwealth legislation. “Child pornography” does not accurately reflect the serious nature of the material. This is because the term indicates legitimacy and compliance on the part of the victim. It too conjures images of children in ‘provocative’ poses rather than suffering abuse. Every photograph captures an actual situation where a child has been abused. This is not pornography.

✗ *Paedophile/pedophile/predator/molester*

✓ *Online Child Sex Offender*

? Pedophilic Disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (DSM V) is classified as sexual interest in prepubescent children. Some victims of online grooming are not prepubescent, nor is having the disorder a criminal offence, unless it is criminally acted upon. For online grooming activities use, “online child sex offender”.

✗ *Revenge porn*

✓ *Image-based abuse*

? The term is problematic as the use of “porn” implies some form of legitimacy or consent on behalf of the people involved, and does not accurately depict the seriousness of the act. A lot of cases of image-based abuse also do not contain motivations of revenge. The term revenge also inaccurately implies that the act is in some form justified or altruistic.

✗ *Danger and risk*

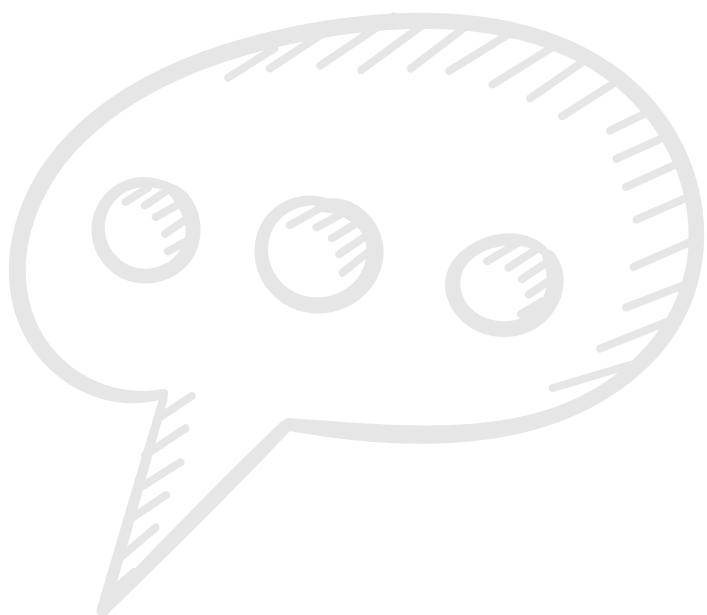
✓ *Challenge*

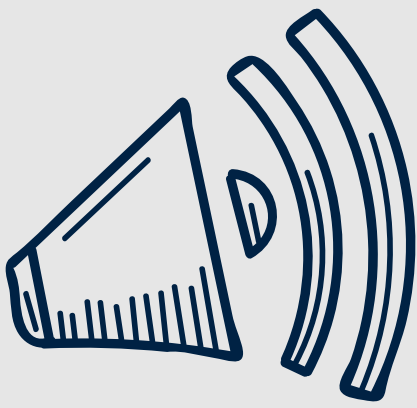
? Words such as “danger” and “risk” can be too emotive when reporting. It can also imply that the incident occurring is not able to be controlled. Using “challenge” instead implies the opposite, that the incident can be overcome.

✗ *“Real world”*

✓ *Online and Offline*

? Young people today live a lot of their life online – they do not separate between the online and offline ‘real’ world. Suggesting that online activities do not exist in the “real” world can suggest that what affects children through social media or gaming is not as important as “real” or offline issues.





KEY MESSAGES



COVID-19 and increased risk for young people online



Online safety



Child exploitation in Australia



Deterrence



COVID-19 and increased risk for young people online

- > Australian law enforcement continues to actively investigate online child sexual exploitation offences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and combating online child exploitation remains a priority.
- > With many students moving to online learning and current isolation restrictions, children and young people are expected to spend an increasing amount of time online and may experience challenges such as unwanted online contact, grooming, personal image sharing and image based abuse (sexual extortion).
- > Parents and carers potentially working from home and some being unable to supervise their children's online activities contributes to the need to provide increased community online safety awareness and education.



Online safety

- > Australian law enforcement regularly investigates cases involving children and young people being targeted by online child sex offenders through social networking, image or video sharing apps, instant messaging or gaming platforms to self-produce online child sexual exploitation material.
- > Children and young people of all ages need the support, guidance and education of adults to stay safe online and prevent online child sexual exploitation:
 - Younger children and those of primary school age should always be overseen by an adult when online.
 - Those of early teenage years should have their online activity monitored and supervised by an adult.
 - Those in older teenage years should be educated about what to do to stay safe when they are online.
- > The most important thing that families and carers can do is to start the conversation about online safety with children from an early age and to continue talking with them regularly throughout all stages of their lives.
- > Consider establishing a Family Online Safety Contract. Developed by ThinkUKnow and The Carly Ryan Foundation, it has been designed to help parents and carers start online safety discussions with their children. A copy is available at thinkuknow.org.au.
- > If your child is experiencing issues online, it is essential to collect evidence - taking screenshots or photos of the content. Once you have collected your evidence, block and report on the app, site or platform where the issue occurred.
 - Report inappropriate contact online to police:
 - If a child is in immediate danger **call Triple Zero (000)**
 - Report Abuse at accce.gov.au
 - Anonymously to Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.

For more information and access to tools, resources and advice, as well as reporting and support services, please visit thinkuknow.org.au, accce.gov.au and esafety.gov.au.

KEY MESSAGES

Child exploitation in Australia

- > In 2019, the AFP received almost **17,000 reports** of online child sexual exploitation. These are reports that involve Australian victims and/or Australian offenders, including children being groomed for sexual purposes. Each report can contain hundreds to thousands of images and videos.
- > The average number of images seized when an offender is arrested has been increasing steadily. From around 1,000 images in the early and mid-2000s to between **10,000 to 80,000 images** and videos today.
- > By the time law enforcement is called in to remove a child from harm or bring an offender to justice, it's already too late. A child has been severely impacted, for life.

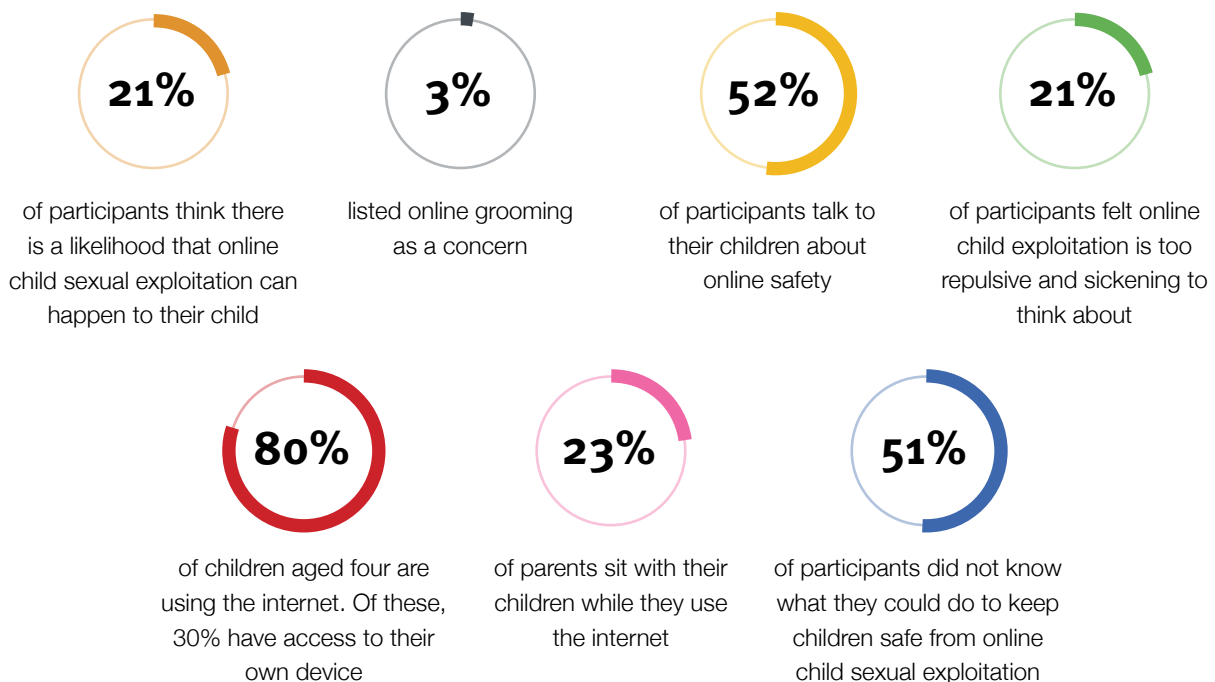
Deterrence

- > Law enforcement agencies continue to actively investigate child sexual exploitation offences during COVID-19.
- > If you procure, access and transmit child abuse and exploitation material, you will be found, arrested and prosecuted.
- > High maximum penalties for child exploitation offences reflect the community's abhorrence of the exploitation of children.



Attitudes on child exploitation in Australia

The ACCCE commissioned market research into the current awareness, perceptions and attitudes of online child sexual exploitation in Australia. The research was released in February 2020 and revealed that:



For the full research report visit accce.gov.au/research



SOCIAL MEDIA

We have developed a series of social media content that will help raise awareness, educate and encourage parents and carers to undertake preventative measures in relation to their child's online safety.

Download the full suite of social media resources, including videos and graphics, at:

accce.gov.au/COVID-19resources



Suggested content

Post 1 (video available):

We need your help [#keepingkidssafeonline](#). With many schools moving to online learning, children and young people are expected to spend more time online. Children of all ages need the support, guidance and education of adults to stay safe online and prevent online child sexual exploitation. Resources to help are available at [@ThinkUKnow_Aus](#) [@ACCCE_AUS](#) and [@eSafetyOffice](#). [#ChildProtection](#) [#onlinesafety](#)

Post 2 (graphic available):

We are still watching! Law enforcement agencies continue to actively investigate online child sexual exploitation offences during COVID-19. If you procure, access and transmit child abuse and exploitation material, we will find, arrest and prosecute you.. [#ACCCE_AUS](#) [#AusFedPolice](#) [#ChildProtection](#) [#keepingkidssafeonline](#) [#ACCCEpursue](#)

Post 3 (graphic available):

The rate of Online Child Sexual Exploitation could see a significant increase as more children increase their time using technology unsupervised. The most important thing that families and carers can do is to start the conversation about [#onlinesafety](#). For more information at [@ThinkUKnow_Aus](#) [@ACCCE_AUS](#) and [@eSafetyOffice](#). [#ChildProtection](#) [#keepingkidssafeonline](#)

Spread the word

Our social media channels will be actively promoting online safety initiatives. We encourage you to join in the conversation and spread the word. You can do this by sharing, liking and commenting on content relevant for your audience.

Hashtags

We encourage you to use the below hashtags to help generate exposure and audience engagement.

[#ACCCE_AUS](#)

[#ACCCEpartnership](#)

[#AusFedPolice](#)

[#ChildProtection](#)

[#keepingkidssafeonline](#)

[#onlineSafety](#)

[#ThinkUKnowAUS](#)

Connect with us

We are also on social media! You can connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.



[@AusFedPolice](#)



[@AusFedPolice](#)



[@AusFedPolice](#)



[@ACCCEaus](#)



[@ACCCE_Aus](#)



[@ThinkUKnowAustralia](#)



[@ThinkUKnow_Aus](#)

ABOUT US



Australian Federal Police (AFP)

The AFP's role is to enforce Commonwealth criminal law, contribute to combating complex, transnational, serious and organised crime impacting Australia's national security and to protect Commonwealth interests from criminal activity in Australia and overseas.

For more information, visit afp.gov.au.

Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE)

The ACCCE brings together resources from Government and Commonwealth agencies, law enforcement agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs), and other partners to prevent and disrupt online sexual exploitation of children.

The ACCCE supports the efforts already being undertaken by the AFP, the Department of Home Affairs and law enforcement agencies to counter child exploitation, including the work performed by the AFP and State and Territory Joint Anti-Child Exploitation Teams (JACET).

For further information about the ACCCE, including operational activity visit accce.gov.au.

ThinkUKnow

ThinkUKnow is Australia's only nationally delivered law enforcement-led online child safety program that provides education for parents, carers and teachers, children and young people to address the issue of online child sexual exploitation.

ThinkUKnow resources explore what young people SEE, SAY, and DO online. Using real case studies from the ACCCE, the program addresses challenges such as self-produced child exploitation (sexting), privacy and unwanted contact, online grooming, sexual

extortion and importantly how to get help and report. Free resources are available for parents, carers and teachers at thinkuknow.org.au.

ThinkUKnow is a partnership between the AFP and industry and delivered in collaboration with all State and Territory police and Neighbourhood Watch Australasia. State and Territory police can gain access to ThinkUKnow youth presentation content and resources by contacting their ThinkUKnow coordinator or the AFP via online-child-safety@afp.gov.au.

Other contacts for online safety issues

eSafety Commissioner

The eSafety Commissioner is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety, and is responsible for online safety issues, including cyberbullying and image based abuse. eSafety can only investigate complaints and remove illegal online material. Grooming and procuring of children online are crimes that are investigated by the police. Visit esafety.gov.au for more information.

The National Office for Child Safety

The National Office for Child Safety provides national leadership, working across the government and private sectors, to deliver national policies and strategies to enhance children's safety and reduce future harm to children. For all enquiries, please contact NationalOfficeforChildSafety@pmc.gov.au.

Report Cybercrime

Cybercrime, such as scams, fraud and identity theft, can be reported to the Australian Cyber Security Centre through [Report Cyber](http://ReportCyber.gov.au).



KEY CONTACTS

For media:

AFP Media Team (ACCCE and ThinkUKnow):
media@afp.gov.au

Social media:

ACCCE Strategic Engagement: accce-comms@afp.gov.au

ThinkUKnow: online-child-safety@afp.gov.au

AFP Social Media: socialmedia@afp.gov.au