



Northern Ireland
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Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Investigation into Consistency in Child
Protection across the CAL Remit:
Child Exploitation and Online Protection
Centre Briefing

14 March 2013

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It might be useful to introduce myself. I have been the chief executive officer of CEOP since November 2010. CEOP is a law enforcement-led child protection centre covering the UK, and our focus is on protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The centre was set up in 2006 and started with its focus very much on online activity. Our focus goes beyond that now, not

least because in the lives of the people whom we seek to protect — children and young people — there is a very limited distinction between the online world and the offline world. So, we tackle offline or real-life threats as well as virtual ones. I also lead for the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland on child protection and child abuse investigations, and I want to make sure that I can be of as much assistance to you as possible in both those capacities.

I will give a brief overview of the issues as I see them. Although the terms of reference are, in a sense, quite specific, I come at them from a slightly detached point of view, and I will not try to duplicate the level of local knowledge that exists. I want to try to add some value from my perspective. I am more than happy to deal with questions on any related subject as best I can. If I cannot answer a question properly, I will offer to go back to the office to do that because I want to make sure that you have the best possible information. First, in the lives of most children and young people, it is now pretty false to distinguish between online threats and offline threats because the proportion of kids who have access to the internet wherever they go through smartphones or other mobile internet-enabled devices, the amount of time that they spend on them, and the extent to which their lives and the way they define themselves is dictated as much by a social networking account as anything else means that we cannot separate the two things. We deal with kids who are vulnerable online and offline and deal with forms of criminality, some of which are very serious and take place across the internet but where the effects are physically and psychologically very harmful and keenly felt. We tend to deal with child sexual exploitation. I would like to drop in on that for a moment. What is child sexual exploitation? A definition is provided in the paper that I submitted to you. In essence, I think that it is two key things: it is about vulnerability meeting power — vulnerability on the part of victims and power on the part of offenders — and that power being abused for sexual purposes. Vulnerability can take many different forms. It might be emotional or physical vulnerability. It might well be vulnerability from susceptibility to people in authority. It might be vulnerability because of social conditions. Vulnerability takes many different forms. Power, in the same way, takes many different forms. Power can be in the form of money, authority or celebrity, as we have known particularly keenly in the past few months. Power can also be institutional. It can be power of coercion. It can actually be the simple physical power of being able to inflict violence.

I think that the particular relevance of that for you is that vulnerability meets power in a particular situation or context. Often, it is a situation that makes that conversion of power and vulnerability into sexual assault possible. That context might be the internet, where people are anonymous, you do not know who people are, and kids take more risks than they would in the real world. It might also be a context such as the BBC in the days of Jimmy Savile on 'Top of the Pops'. It could be a religious setting or school. Of course, that setting might be a sports club where children and young people gather or one of the other types of institution in which you have a particular proprietorial interest.

So, in a slightly defensive way, I can see your particular interest in understanding how the institutions or organisations over which you preside need to be target-hardened, so that they do not do what has happened occasionally in the past; they do not amplify the power of the offender or increase the vulnerability of the potential victim, but actually equalise it and eliminate the way in which the institution could be abused. So, in that sense, there is a defensive approach to the issue. I think that there is also a proactive approach. Sport, in particular, is a fantastic, positive thing for the vast majority of young people; it is about team building, building relationships, culture, physical health and all those things. Places where kids gather together are also great opportunities to help to make them safe in the rest of their lives. They are great opportunities to channel information. You can see that in some of the codes of practice that are being brought forward for some youth clubs.

There is a sense in which it is really important to ensure that any institution that gathers kids together is safe for them. However, there is also a sense that we have to respect that they lead complex interwoven lives. Just as we want them to be safe at their sports club, for example, or, indeed, in the library, we also want the fact of their being there to, somehow, help to make them safe and healthier in the rest of their lives as well.

I will happily talk about some of the more extreme threats that CEOP deals with. However, I am not sure that they are necessarily central to what you are getting at. I will move over them. I will happily talk about them if members are interested.

My next thought is about which strategies will help. At CEOP, we talk about "prevent, protect and pursue". I think that that is a pretty good mantra. The most important thing is for children not to come to harm, which is why focusing on prevention is so important. If children are vulnerable or likely to come to harm, protecting them is as important and, arguably, more important than necessarily bringing people to justice, although, of course, we want to do that, too. With regard to "pursue", it is important

for people who pose a particular threat to kids to be brought to justice and to have their activity curtailed in one way or another.

Although I think that it is quite important — and, obviously, very important for organisations and committees, such as yours — to focus on areas for development, I also think that it is worth stepping back and realising the extent to which there are a number of positive things going on in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK. I have had the privilege to look at legal systems in a number of other parts of the world. One aspect of good news is that we have to realise that, in the whole of the UK, the legislation and the process around identifying children who are at risk, protecting them and dealing with offences as they are committed is among the world's best. In fact, you could probably say that it is the world standard. So, there is a good basis of legislation, practice and understanding on which it is always possible to go forward. Nevertheless, that is there.

With regard to prevention, there are some really good education products out there. I think that parents need to be educated as much as children and young people. That came up in one of your previous hearings. I am happy to talk in more detail about that in a moment. There is a sense that education is the best prevention because, beyond a certain point, although you and we can put as many safety measures around kids as we like, sure enough, some of them will find a way past them and some people who would prey on kids will find ways past them. We have to give kids the means to survive in those circumstances when the safeguards that we have put in place have not worked. That is as true on the internet as it is in schools, youth groups and other places where kids and adults come into contact.

With regard to protection, there are good safeguarding policies. I was really impressed, if I may say so. I was looking at the checklist that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) produces. I know that you have heard evidence from the NSPCC previously. What that shows me is that the policies, process, and so on, in Northern Ireland sport are as rigorous as anywhere else in the UK, which probably means that they are as rigorous as anywhere else in the world. Therefore, we are not struggling with regard to policy and process. There is actually no shortage of understanding of good practice. There is no shortage of knowing what the right thing to do is.

With regard to pursuit, I think that we are all keen to ensure that people who pose a threat to children are pursued. The one area where I do not think that we are as smart as we should be, and you have picked up on it, is in the area of sharing information. It is very rare for offenders to be convicted at court — certainly, much rarer than their committing offences. There are a number of occasions when things happen that make people ask questions. It is really important that information that justifiably raises suspicion about an individual, particularly an individual who seeks to work with children and to continue to do so, is shared in a way that enables people to understand that they may be at risk, assess it for themselves and to put steps in place to mitigate that risk. There is always a need to do that better. No one has completely solved that issue. Nevertheless, if there is one more thing with regard to pursuing offenders, it is spotting them, realising that there may be lots of valid information about the risk that they pose and sharing that with the people who need to know — if they move from one sports club, sport or job to another — not losing that and tying all that up. I speak as somebody who has had to take some responsibility for the police service's issues on sharing information about Jimmy Savile effectively. So, that is not something that anybody has got completely right.

I will make my final points and then I will happily submit myself to any questions that you wish to ask. The brief mentioned recommendations. So, I will make a couple of recommendations, if I may. The first relates to education. As I said, whatever safety nets or filters that we put in place, there will always be the fact — not just the conceivable risk, but the fact — that children will still be vulnerable and that people who pose a threat to them may still have access to them. Educating kids about what to do in those circumstances is hugely important whether it is about cyberbullying and their online lives or physical abuse. In particular, with regard to the online world, educating adults is just as important as educating kids because most kids know far more than their parents about what they are doing and the technology. It is a blind spot for many parents.

So, education is important. There is not enough of it. It is not in everybody's curriculum. It is not driven home as it should be. That is why I think that it is particularly interesting to address you, who preside over libraries, youth and sports clubs, and so on. These are such great opportunities to channel that education that, somehow, they might otherwise miss.

The second recommendation — support working and partnership — is an obvious one, but it is important to say it, particularly when we are talking about protecting children. There is an exemplary

partnership with the NSPCC, for example, making sure that kids in Northern Ireland sport are well protected.

I am really interested and encouraged by the recent creation of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), which, I believe, started work in December 2012. That will be a significant step forward. The great news is that SBNI can probably learn from the mistakes that have been made elsewhere and make improvements. That is just one example of the many partnerships that work.

The final recommendation is, in some senses, the one that I feel most passionately about. Looking at the information that I reviewed in order to prepare for today, I believe that you understand the issues really well. There is no obvious gap in the legislation or the process or in knowledge. What is needed, in my view, is ruthless implementation of what you already know works as far as you can push it. That is easy for me to say, but that is where, I would suggest, your efforts would best be focused.

I see how difficult that is, because there will be kids' sports clubs that are beyond the reach of some of the systems that you operate. I would not spend much time trying to reinvent stuff that is working perfectly well already. I would focus the effort on driving it forward in every possible way, because every child is at risk and the only way to reach as many of them as possible is to be really focused about getting the messages to them.

Thank you for your time.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. That was very interesting; thank you for those recommendations.

In your paper, you state:

"CEOP will transition into the National Crime Agency (NCA) as one of four Commands along with Border Policing, Economic Crime and Organised Crime. It is intended that the NCA will be fully operational by the end of 2013. The Agency must have regard to the safeguarding of children and consider the welfare of children in all its work."

You will understand that there is reluctance on the part of a couple of parties in the Northern Ireland Executive to become involved in NCA. Will Northern Ireland and its children be left at a disadvantage?

Mr Davies: I appreciate that that is a very sensitive topic, and I will choose my words extremely carefully, if I may. The voluntary support and education links that CEOP already has with Northern Ireland, which are laid out in the rest of the paper, are in my view capable of being sustained on their terms in NCA regardless of the ongoing debate, which, I believe — you will correct me if I am wrong — centres around powers and accountability and, in particular, the unitary model of law enforcement in Northern Ireland.

There is nothing that we do currently that will stop, depending on that debate. If there is a loss, it will be that we are going from a place where CEOP feels a bit like a self-contained unit to a new organisation that will have a legal obligation to have regard to the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children in all its activities, not just in CEOP. That is the reference to a clause in the Crown Courts Bill that subjects NCA to section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which, I appreciate, legislates for England and Wales, but it is a legal obligation.

I have been involved in the design of NCA for the whole time I have been chief executive of CEOP. Clearly, you would expect that my ambition is for the agency to be wholly about protecting the public, including children, not just leaving it to CEOP to do it.

I can see some real benefits to that, and I can see some ways in which NCA will be able to do things that our current arrangements cannot. There might be some degradation to that, and there might be some limitations as to how well all those benefits can be realised if NCA officers cannot operate in Northern Ireland in quite the same way as they can in England, Wales and Scotland.

That is as far as I would go. We will do our very best to protect children anywhere, including in the United Kingdom, no matter what. The entirety of what we currently do as CEOP will be able to be sustained.

The Chairperson: I appreciate the difficulty that you have in commenting on that. It also goes back to the point that was made that we could be smarter in sharing information. That is at the heart of what NCA is about.

Mr Davies: It is. We in CEOP share information and disseminate packages of intelligence anywhere in the world, including Northern Ireland, about people whom we have identified from our intelligence gathering as being at risk. That will continue. The kind of information that I am talking about goes beyond the particular point about the National Crime Agency. Actually, you have picked up some of those more local information clearing issues for yourselves in previous hearings that I have read about.

So, really, there might be a loss of some of the new services that NCA intends to provide in its overall endeavour to protect the public. What we do is sustainable, regardless of that debate.

The Chairperson: Will you talk to me about the CEOP ambassadors? Who are they, what do they do and how can you become one?

Mr Davies: Certainly; I would be delighted to. As you may know, we have an education brand called Think U Know, which has existed for several years. With that, we try to take our understanding of why children are under threat, particularly but not exclusively online, and turn it into a lively education package that kids will respond to and which changes their behaviour. We have a team of about four people in CEOP who produce these packages on a regular basis.

The voluntary support that takes those packages and delivers them to children is just that: it is entirely voluntary. We have more than 80,000 volunteers across the UK, mainly working in classrooms but also in youth clubs. They take those packages and deliver them to kids in their setting. All we do is provide the high-quality information and materials. Last year, we reached over 2.5 million children in the UK through that voluntary network.

The role of ambassadors is to sit at the top of the voluntary network. They cascade training to other volunteers and attend a higher level of training at CEOP. We have something in the region of 5,000 or 6,000 ambassadors. They also tend to talk about CEOP and convey its messages to conferences and other events.

We are constantly recruiting ambassadors. It is a very happy coincidence that the next ambassador training that we are doing is in Belfast in October. However, we did not arrange that specially so that I could tell you about it.

Our ambassadors sit at the top of a very large voluntary body of people who, because they want to make the children for whom they are responsible safe, take our education materials and deliver them to them.

The Chairperson: OK. Thank you. Mr McGimpsey was the Health Minister during the previous mandate. He will be aware that I have a particular interest in missing children, particularly those who are involved in the care system. I note that CEOP is the national lead for that. I also note that it is about the targeting of children online, based on their heightened vulnerability. I see those children as some of the most vulnerable in our society. Will you talk about the difficulties they present and where they fit into the system?

Mr Davies: Sure. First, it is important to identify that if children go missing, it is generally a symptom of something else. That may seem self-evident, but it is really important to remind ourselves of it. It has been the experience time and again, not just in law enforcement but in other public services, that children who frequently go missing can be viewed as a nuisance and, in other ways, can be seen as the architects of their own problems.

We need to identify that children who go missing are likely to be at a heightened risk. We need to get to the issues that lead them to go missing and what is going on while they are missing. We need to make the links between missing children and the issues of other forms of vulnerability. Those include a variety of abuse, including child sexual exploitation. It is easy for me to say that, but operationalising it and making it work at ground level is more complicated. However, I would like to give you a couple of thoughts about it. One is that this actually goes back to proper data sharing. The situation in England and Wales, which I am slightly better sighted on, is that it has been possible for children to go missing from homes in which they have been placed by a local authority and either every single

incident is reported to the police and nauseam, to the point where it becomes white noise, or the incidents are not reported at all. There are different categories of homes into which children are placed, and some are better than others at having care plans for kids and at spotting missing children as an indicator of other vulnerability.

We also have issues in law enforcement in which we may gather some data on children going missing but may not treat it as an indicator of other vulnerability. We are also not good enough yet at sharing information between children's homes and schools, which, of course, log absences and truancy, and our own information, to put together a composite picture of what is going on with a child. Unfortunately, it is still possible for a child to be absent in a number of different ways at different times.

The authorities, who should be working together to safeguard children, are not really picking this up well enough. A lot of work has gone into sharing data, because sharing the personal data of individual kids is the first step. We are doing a lot of work, which includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland, around child sexual exploitation that will raise awareness of all front line workers, not just specialists, about how to understand missing children and the possibility that it is indicative of a child being subject of some other form of harm. Obviously, finding kids when they go missing is the first priority, but, too often, we stop there. We have to look well beyond that.

That is a brief picture. My recommendation is there to, hopefully, get the benefit of all the thinking that is going into this across the UK and ensure that lessons are being learned and that the changes that are in process and which are now taking place are copied or improved upon in Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson: Thank you. I could ask lots of questions on this, but I know that I would be taking us away from what we are talking about today. I will open up the meeting to other members at this stage.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your presentation. As someone who is involved in youth work, I listened very carefully to what you said. You quite rightly identified that during the recent debate in the media, issues of policy and accountability were given as the reasons why some parties could not support this. I personally see those not as reasons but excuses. You used the word "might". Clearly, in the evidence given today, it is very obvious that the decisions not to have Northern Ireland involved in NCA at the same level as parts of the mainland will very clearly mean that there will be a loss of services, which, potentially, leaves children much more vulnerable. I think that that is appalling, regrettable and shameful.

You mentioned working with the police on cyberbullying. Given the tragic circumstances of the young lady in Birmingham, is there more that CEOP, NCA and the police can do to tackle this problem, or, because of the international nature of cyberbullying and social media, is it something that is beyond control?

Mr Davies: I do not think that it is beyond control, but we have to understand that it is a massive risk and that there is not one solution to mitigating the risk and protecting everyone. At CEOP, we try to be open to anyone who wants to click CEOP or who wants to send us information. There are some bits of information that people send us that are very much our business, and there are some that we have to move along. Bullying, whether it is with or without a sexual aspect, we move along to an NGO in the UK, but we also play it into the organisations that are the venue for the bullying, such as Facebook, Twitter and others.

What are the problems? First, there is so much of it. People's lives are so digital now that it is extremely difficult to envisage a time when we can control the internet to the extent necessary. Secondly, we need to understand that this is human behaviour amplified, multiplied and distorted by the internet, but it is not the internet's fault. Bullying existed long before the internet, and it will exist when the internet is replaced. This is human behaviour taking place in a particular venue. That does not make it right, but the solution does not lie in just pressing a button somewhere or reconfiguring the internet: the solution lies in addressing human behaviour.

Law enforcement on the internet is more challenging and complicated because most internet traffic goes across at least one national boundary. Legislation is difficult, and depending on where the other side of the offending takes place, it can be very challenging indeed. In my view, most of the legislation required for cyberbullying exists, but we cannot look to law enforcement to enforce our way out of this situation. It is about amending people's behaviour.

The internet will get progressively safer as it goes on, as and when people can make purchasing decisions about which service provider they use based on how safe the network is alongside everything else. The internet organisations that will survive the test of time will gradually mature in their ability to tackle cyberbullying, but I do not think that we will be able to say that it is under control any time soon, which is why part of the answer always has to be education — educating victims about how not to put themselves at risk online, and CEOP provides information on that.

It is also about educating offenders in how harmful some of their activity is. I picked up a story in the paper yesterday — I do not know whether you saw it — about a professional boxer who got rather fed up with somebody who was trolling him online. He found out where the person lived and kind of turned the tables. The boxer let him know that he was on his way to his address, took a picture of the street sign at the end of the person's road and said that he was coming to get him. One of the reasons why people took such pleasure in that story was the sense that such people have an inordinate amount of power and anonymity, and that it was nice to see that power being pushed back in the other direction. This is a major issue, and CEOP does not have the resources or the capacity to focus on it. The solutions will be partly technical, partly society change — *[Inaudible due to mobile phone interference.]*

Mr Humphrey: Resources are the key. It is very clear that this is a huge problem. It is vital for organisations tackling the issue to come together to find solutions and bring people to justice. That is why I think that political ideologies coming into decisions that are about protecting children and young people and preventing that from being maximised in Northern Ireland are wrong.

Mr McGimpsey: Peter, thank you for your presentation. My question is about the internet and internet providers. We have an element of control, or responsibility, in other areas, whether it is through safeguarding, vetting, barring, the law, and so on. About five years ago, I dealt with internet providers on the issue of suicide chat rooms. Without going into the whole story, the response I got from Google and Yahoo! was that they were just providers and were not responsible for content. They said that what people put on their systems was not their responsibility. As you are aware, those companies are not local: they are multi-billion-dollar international companies based in the US, and they were not going to listen to a wee place such as this.

The next stage was the Byron review and process, with, hopefully, Downing Street being involved and being able to put some pressure on providers. I was wondering where you are with that now. We in Northern Ireland had no control over that area: we could not reach them or touch them. We can do family intervention, we can have child protection officers and we can do vetting and barring, but we could not touch that area. As you are aware, it went far beyond suicide chat rooms: it involved the whole paraphernalia. Where are you with that?

Mr Davies: My take on this is that we can, roughly speaking, track the philosophy behind the internet to the United States of America at the present time. It may well be that in five or 10 years time, a greater proportion of the internet is actually run according to the philosophy prevalent in China, Russia or somewhere else. That is just a fact: we are not in control of much of it, if we are honest.

The three factors that limit the extent to which internet service providers are going to intervene are as follows: first, there is the philosophical view. They just think that they have put something out there and that the use people make of it is up to them, for good or ill. Something backing up that philosophy to some extent, I have heard, is that parts of the world have had uprisings — the Arab spring, and so on — where, had there been more control over the internet, those uprisings might not have happened. They see it as a slightly uncontrollable force, generally for good, and if you start controlling one bit, it is very difficult to stop.

Secondly, there are issues of cost. These are businesses, and they are trying to make money. If they spend a lot of money trying to make it safer, that is less money that they are making. Thirdly, there are technical issues about speed. They are trying to serve a very young customer base, generally speaking, which will notice the half-second difference in service. I have that as well. When I go to my office and turn on my computer, I want it to work instantly. I do not want to wait 30 seconds for it to wake up and get started. Kids are also like that. The difference is that I cannot go and buy a computer from somebody else. I am stuck with what I have in the office, but they can change their minds just like that. They can hop from one social network, search engine or provider just like that, and they frequently do. Service providers are reluctant to put in filters because those can slow the service down and might drive away customers.

So, we are fighting an uphill battle. However, all is not lost, in my view. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has appointed Claire Perry, who has actually made some significant inroads into the service providers across the UK and got them to consider doing things that they were not necessarily going to do previously. There are some signs that proper impetus can make a difference. I also see that service providers are starting to think about how to provide services that parents can use to make their children safer: for example, controlling access to some sites, including suicide sites, and controlling the times at which kids can access the internet through that service.

The problem is that the internet is an adolescent. It has massive potential, but it does not quite know where its strengths are and has not quite learned to control its negative tendencies. That will take time to filter through. The best sustaining internet companies get more mature. They start bringing in lawyers and establish relationships with law enforcement and Governments because they see that that is the way in which they are still going to be around in five or 10 years time. However, it is an agonisingly slow process and, in the meantime, you have children and other people falling prey to things on the internet that they might not have been falling prey to otherwise. That is my take on the picture, which I think is what you wanted.

Mr McGimpsey: I appreciate that. Following on from that, it needs a national response, and we were getting a national response through Gordon Brown and Downing Street, and so on. That is welcome. The US is the place where you would want to see a national response right now. Is there any prospect of something happening there, and that the US will take more of an interest in the providers? They are very hot on law and order in the States you know.

Mr Davies: To be fair, there is legislation there, particularly around child protection, that there is not in the UK. There is the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008, which places an obligation on service providers to report incidents of child sexual exploitation that they see to the authorities. My centre receives probably at least 1,000 referrals a month for the UK part of that process. So they have legislated. There is not similar legislation in the UK, and I am not sure that it would have anything like the same effect. There are clearly some forms of material that I would not want my children accessing, such as material on suicide and things such as that, which are not covered by that legislation, but there is some legislation there. The issue is that the United States does not entirely run the internet. It is a completely international phenomenon; a pretty stateless phenomenon, when it comes to it. The idea that states can control what goes on on the internet is inherently difficult. We can mitigate some risks. We can do what we can. However, we cannot confuse that with solving the whole problem. It is very uncomfortable.

Mr Hilditch: For me, in the paper, the NCA issue sticks out. Under questioning from the Chair, you indicated that you could see advantages to that. Would you elaborate on those opportunities?

Mr Davies: I am sorry; could I ask you to repeat the question. I have had a head cold and am not always able to hear.

Mr Hilditch: Under questioning from the Chair, you indicated that you could see advantages to National Crime Agency involvement here. Are you in a position to elaborate on any of those advantages?

Mr Davies: I can, in general terms, but I would prefer my first answer to be the one that you use for the purpose of the whole question. Things that I expect NCA to be able to do in the area of child exploitation might include mobilising significant resources from the other commands and from its operational arm, which would be about 2,000 officers, to undertake investigations into child sexual exploitation. I think that that might be significant.

So as not to give rise to the risk that I am overstating, clearly the ability of officers to exercise powers to do that is important, but also, clearly, if it were not possible to do that, we would just have to find some other way of doing it. That is one example. Take, as another example, the borders command. Think about the amount of child trafficking and the number of child sex offenders who cross national borders. There are great opportunities to be realised there, by more closely linking the issue of child sexual exploitation with the way that we police the borders of the United Kingdom.

What I have identified there are new opportunities within NCA that I believe CEOP and protecting children would benefit from. I probably need to draw the line there, because I am not saying that those opportunities would be lost completely depending on the outcome of this particular debate about powers. We would still have the objective of protecting everybody in the UK, especially children,

regardless of that. I am probably saying that, around the edges of some of this, if there was slightly less ability for NCA to operate in a particular place, that service and the ability to do that might equally be slightly less. However, let me be very clear that we are determined to protect every child in the UK. We are already heavily involved as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre in Northern Ireland. We will continue to be so.

Mr Hilditch: Thank you. I will leave it at that; I know that time is pushing on.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat. Thank you for the presentation. Given the global nature of child exploitation, which is a huge concern to everybody, what are working relationships like with European agencies such as CEOP? It strikes me that the global connections are really important.

Mr Davies: You are absolutely right. We have very strong working relationships with the law enforcement bodies of a number of other countries with which we tend to do business. We are founder members of something called the virtual global task force, which does pretty much what its title suggests. It tries to defeat the national boundaries that law enforcement encounters in dealing with a phenomenon that is not controlled by national boundaries at all. We work in partnership, particularly with the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. We also have bilateral relationships at CEOP with just about every European country. We venture off into parts of the world where we see a threat appearing or where we see the UK posing a threat. For example, last year, officers from CEOP went to Kuwait to tackle two offenders who were systematically using the internet to abuse children in the UK and elsewhere. We build the relationships where we can see the need, but we are always open to the fact that, this being the internet, the threat may bounce around other parts of the world. We are always conscious of the need to make more friends as we go along.

Ms McCorley: Do you feel that the new human trafficking provisions, which will be brought in shortly under the Criminal Justice Bill, will help?

Mr Davies: I am not an expert on those provisions. I am reasonably familiar with the issue of child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but children are trafficked for other reasons as well. Of course, the process of trafficking presents itself differently whether it is children or adults who are the victims. However, if you are a trafficker, you probably do not care very much; you just want to make money out of human misery.

Any legislation that closes gaps in the way in which we deal with trafficking is good news, from my point of view. However, I do not want to overstretch myself; I am not an expert on that legislation. Quite rightly, people are saying that there needs to be some additional focus on trafficking as a whole.

Mr McMullan: What is your relationship with the PSNI?

Mr Davies: Our relationship with the PSNI is strong. The PSNI, of course, is part of the Association of Chief Police Officers, and a PSNI representative always comes to the working group on child protection and child abuse investigation, which I chair. I had a meeting at PSNI headquarters this morning just to firm up that relationship. I had a meeting with the PSNI's head of public protection, Mr Skelton, as did my deputy, within the past couple of months. Operationally, we have a good relationship; we share intelligence and we work well together.

The Chairperson: We have run out of time, and there is a taxi waiting for you. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with us this morning. It has been invaluable to us in our investigation. If you are content, we will correspond with you on the other issues that will recur.

Mr Davies: I will be more than happy to provide any help to you that I can. I am very grateful for your time this morning.

The Chairperson: Thank you.