Nexus

Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Abuse and Abusive Relationships

Sexual Abuse in a Digital World

CPHVA Annual Professional Conference, 6th November 2025

#BreakTheCycle

Our Vision

Nexus

A society free from sexual abuse and abusive relationships.



#BreakTheCycle

Our Mission

Nexus

To enable positive change for people impacted by sexual abuse and abusive relationships through supporting, informing, and influencing society.



#BreakTheCycle

Our services

www.nexusni.org

Nexus
Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Abuse and Abusive Relationships

Counselling age 8 upwards

Support Groups & Aftercare Services

Early Intervention & Prevention Services

Manage 24hour DSA Helpline

Fundraising

Supporting, informing & influencing

Content Warning

Nexus



domestic and sexual abuse
helpline 0808 802 1414

#BreakTheCycle

Definition of Sexual Abuse

"Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland"

Strategy 2016

"Any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, financial, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is threatening, controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability.)"

Coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's

What is Sexual Violence?

Nexus

Sexual violence and abuse involves forcing someone to take part in sexual activities against their consent or understanding.

- The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material; watching sexual activities; encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways; and offences relating to downloading to child abuse

Examples of Sexual Abuse

Nexus
Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Abuse and Abusive Relationships

Rape	Sexual assault	IPV
CSE	CSA	Stealthing
Corrective rape	Upskirting	Downblousing

Types of Sexual Abuse

Nexus
Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Abuse and Abusive Relationships

Controlling contraception

Sex trafficking/exploitation

Online/image based sexual abuse

Deliberate infection with STI

FGM

Drug Facilitated rape

Forced marriage

Institutional/carer sexual abuse

Online Abuse

Nexus

Exists in many different forms:

- Online sexual harassment & abuse
- Stalking
- Bullying
- Hate speech
- Online trolling
- Identity theft
- Hacking



What is Online Sexual Abuse?

Nexus

Online sexual abuse can be any type of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse that takes place through screens.

Sending someone unwelcome communication about sex or hateful comments based on sex, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

Sending partners, friends, acquaintances, or strangers unwanted requests for nude photos or videos or to livestream sexual acts.

What is Online Sexual Abuse?

Nexus

Sharing private images or videos without the consent of everyone involved (also known as revenge porn or nonconsensual pornography)

Grooming children to enable their sexual abuse either online or offline.

Performing sexual acts on webcam without the consent of everyone involved or in inappropriate settings (like during an online class or online work meeting).

Features of online world

Nexus

CONTENT

People are being exposed to highly sexualised and violent imagery which desensitises and normalises inappropriate behaviours

CONTACT

The anonymous nature of the internet creates a sense of security whereby people tend to be less careful about the information they share. Predators will use this information to target particularly vulnerable people.

Cyberbullying isolates a person from their peers, rendering them more susceptible to contact from strangers.

CONDUCT

Accessing particular sites can expose vulnerability eg. LGBT communities

Producing self generated indecent images may be used as leverage over a person rather than taking the time to build up trust

Grooming

Grooming is a form of abuse in order to gain power and dominance over another person through strategic manipulation

Adults can be groomed by romantic partners, friends and family, employers and co-workers, or anyone else you have some form of relationship with.



Groomers are so good at what they do, many people assume the overly kind behaviors are genuine and in good faith

Grooming





A groomer will often start out with frequent compliments, kind acts of service, love bombing behaviors, they might act like they want to spend every minute with you, sharing secrets intimately between each other, ultimately making you feel like you are the best person they have ever met.



As soon as trust and dependence are developed, the groomer's true motivation of control sets, oftentimes without the victim even noticing.

How the Internet enables groomers

Nexus

Anonymity

Isolation

Concealing technology

The dark web/ paedophile handbook

No limits to distance

Immediacy of contact

How the Internet enables groomers

Nexus

Easier to prey on vulnerabilities

Multiple opportunities to target victims via various apps etc.

Access to in depth information

Repeat victimisation (images shared/viewed)

Heightens awareness of friendship groups

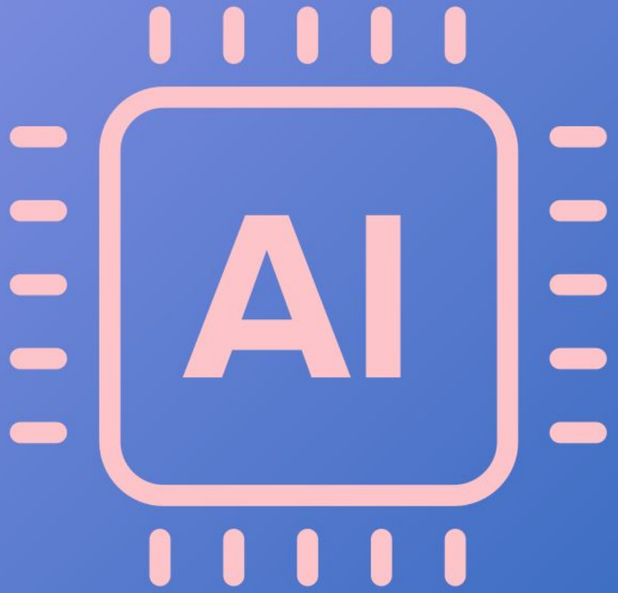
No escape type relationship

Using AI to abuse...

Nexus

Manipulation of Videos & Images (Deepfakes, Nudification apps)

Automated Harassment (Spamming, Trolling, Spreading Fake Info)



Fake Evidence or Videos (Manipulation)

Data Extraction (Scraping, Phishing, Data mining)

Creating Fake Profiles, Identities & Conversations (Catfishing, Coercion, Grooming)

Voice Cloning & Impersonation (Deception)

AI-generated imagery of child sexual abuse has progressed at such an accelerated rate that the IWF is now seeing the first realistic examples of AI videos depicting the sexual abuse of children.

Nexus

IWF

Data from the Internet Watch Foundation found that in just one dark web forum, over a one-month period:

11,108 AI generated images had been shared, and the IWF were able to confirm 2,978 of these depicted AI generated child sexual abuse material.

Key Updates from the July 2024 Report

Increase in AI-generated Child Sexual Abuse Material:
Over 3,500 new AI-generated criminal child sexual abuse images have been uploaded on to the same dark web forum as previously analysed in October 2023.

More Severe Images: Of the AI-generated images confirmed to be child sexual abuse on the forum, more images depicted the most severe Category A abuse, indicating that perpetrators are more able to generate complex ‘hardcore’ scenarios.

Emergence of AI Child Sexual Abuse Videos: AI-generated child sexual abuse videos, primarily deepfakes, have started circulating, highlighting rapid technological advancements in AI models/generators. Increasingly, deepfake videos shared in dark web forums take adult pornographic videos and add a child’s face using AI tools.

Key Updates from the July 2024 Report

Clear Web Increase: There is a noticeable increase in AI-generated child sexual abuse imagery on the clear web, including on commercial sites.

AI Child Sexual Abuse Featuring Known Victims and Famous Children: Perpetrators increasingly use fine-tuned AI models to generate new imagery of known victims of child sexual abuse or famous children.

Impact

- We must not underestimate the trauma of online abuse
- Effect on person subjected to online abuse can be significant
- No scale of abuse
- Repeated victimization when images reshared, viewed etc

#BreakTheCycle

What can be done?

Nexus

Educate ourselves and each other - increase awareness amongst public and professionals.

- If you or someone you know has been a victim, follow the advice of trusted organisations like PSNI or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and follow the steps and guidance:
  - Reassure it is not their fault
  - Stay calm and reach out for help
  - Preserve all evidence if possible
  - Stop all communication
  - Report
  - Use tools like Report Remove (under 18) to try and get images removed.
  - Seek professional help
  - Alert relevant platforms

Supporting



Listen

Believe

Don't judge

Support

Empower

Inform

Nexus

"The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor…Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure."

Judith Herman

Nexus

Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Abuse and Abusive Relationships

THANK YOU!