

News story: Home Secretary announces measures to combat child sexual exploitation

The announcement will be made during a speech at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Summit, Towards a Common Future.

Opening the “More Secure Future” event on Wednesday the Home Secretary will set out plans to provide funding to a number of projects aimed at preventing and supporting victims of CSE. A number of Commonwealth countries will receive a share of £2 million from the UK Commonwealth 18-20 Fund for projects to teach children and young people how to protect themselves while online and put the infrastructure in place to prevent CSE.

Another £600,000 will be awarded to voluntary organisations designed to help victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in the UK. This includes a national helpline for victims and bespoke therapy to help child victims with learning disabilities share and recover from their experiences of abuse.

The Home Secretary will also confirm that the UK government has formally begun the process of ratification of the Council of Europe’s Convention to the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention), further affirming its commitment to tackling the crime across the globe.

Speaking ahead of the speech, the Home Secretary said:

Child Sexual Exploitation is a cruel and vicious crime that no child in the world should suffer.

This government is leading the world in tackling this horrendous crime. We have made significant investment to enable law enforcement officers to actively seek out and bring offenders to justice and develop new capabilities to find and safeguard victims, as well as investing in new technology to find and remove more illegal imagery of children than ever before.

But we cannot tackle this despicable crime alone. It is only through working in partnership with industry, civil society and partner countries that we can work toward eradicating child sexual exploitation. This funding announced today will play a vital role in helping children protect themselves online, while making significant improvements to these countries’ law enforcement response.

Around £2 million from the UK Commonwealth 2018-20 Fund will be provided via the Home Office:

- The African Union will be awarded £1.4 million to strengthen regional and national capacity within countries across Africa including Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria to tackle online child exploitation. They will also be instrumental in gathering evidence to build knowledge and inform effective practice for the future.
- Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere (PEaCE) Sri Lanka will benefit from nearly £570,000 to work with selective partners including the National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Education on projects aimed at combating online child sexual exploitation. One of the projects will look at empowering children to stay safe online by teaching them preventative tools against online predators. There will also be the reinforcement of links and cohesive partnerships between multiple authorities and law enforcement to collectively help young people and survivors of online Child Sexual Exploitation.

Both projects clearly demonstrated the significant impact they would have in improving the response to CSE in their respective countries.

In the UK, £600,000 from the Government's dedicated £7 million victim support fund will be divided between:

- Safeline, which runs a national support line for all victims of child sexual abuse
- NAPAC, which supports adults who were victims in childhood. They do this by running support groups for victims, training professionals who victims might confide in, running a helpline for adult survivors, and carrying out research
- NSPCC, which is developing a therapeutic service specifically targeted at children with learning disabilities who have been victims of CSA

Our capabilities to hinder online perpetrators and protect victims have been strengthened by the use of Project Arachnid. This ground breaking technology is working to identify and remove indecent images of children from the internet at an unprecedented level. Arachnid has analysed around 42,000,000,000 images and 1.2 billion URLs for suspected child sexual abuse material and issued more than 500,000 take down notices.

In the UK, the government has declared child sexual exploitation a national threat and has made significant investment to protect children, support victims, and bring perpetrators to justice.

The UK will be hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Summit, Towards a Common Future. A series of events will take place across the week from 16-20 April 2018. Millions of pounds worth of funding will be announced to tackle global challenges.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Summit, Towards a Common Future was launched in September 2017 by the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary General. The 18-20 Fund was simultaneously launched to deliver a

portfolio of projects across the Commonwealth and its member states.