Jess Phillips MP
Minister for Safeguarding and
Violence against Women & Girls

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14th November 2024

Dear LEAs,

I am the Minister responsible for tackling child sexual abuse. Critical to tackling this threat is the UK National Child Abuse Image Database (CAID). CAID was provided to all Police Forces in response to David Cameron declaring Child Sexual Abuse a National Threat in 2015, a status which remains today.

The database contains in excess of 30 million images relating to children who have been subjected to online child abuse. This data assists investigators to effectively identify unknown victims of abuse and each year police identify growing numbers of child victims who are subsequently safeguarded. However, identifying and locating victims is a significant challenge and it is imperative that we do all within our power to support victim identification officers in this vital area of child protection.

Some time ago investigators informed the CAID team that increasing numbers of victims were being depicted in images and videos wearing school uniforms. Officers made every effort to identify the schools and subsequently the victims, however on many occasions, due to the limitations of the available technology and data, a number of victims were not identified or identified within lengthy timeframes delaying the opportunity to intervene and safeguard.

In response, the Home Office worked with a company called Camera Forensics and a charity known as The Global Emancipation Network to develop the Uniform Intelligence Hub (UIH) which is a database containing images of UK school uniforms.

This database is now deployed in every UK police force and is used on a regular basis to identify child victims of abuse who are present in images and videos wearing a school uniform. Investigators can search logos/badges/school ties and combinations of pieces of uniform that are within the dataset. If a match is identified, officers can locate the school and liaise with school safeguarding leads to identify and subsequently safeguard the child.

As a consequence, numerous victims have been identified, rescued, and safeguarded from further abuse. However, the database is only 85% complete and user feedback has confirmed that investigators need the missing images to now be included to maximise the opportunity to locate victims. In addition, some of the images that are present are of poor quality and require replacing.

To address this issue, we have worked with Camera Forensics who have developed a portal which will enable schools to upload images of uniform relating to their own establishment. We have reached out to police forces who have confirmed they would be able to deploy school liaison officers and or community teams to work with schools to

achieve the ambition of ensuring all schools, with a uniform policy, have representation in the dataset.

The portal was tested during a pilot that included 7 police forces and a small number of schools in Hertfordshire. More recently we have supported Northamptonshire police who are working in partnership with approximately 250 local schools to successfully upload images.
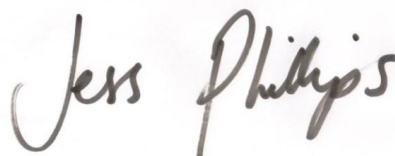
The UIH is funded by the Home Office and has received the support of the National Police Chiefs Council. The system has been subjected to an IT Health Check and fulfils audit and DPA requirements. Prior to inclusion in the dataset all images uploaded are assessed and any personal identifiable information is permanently removed.

Richard Bunting, Policy Advisor in the Safeguarding Strategy and Systemic Improvement Team in the Department for Education has been updated throughout. More recently Eliot Barrass, the Children's Wellbeing Bill Manager for Independent Education and School Safeguarding Division, Pupil Wellbeing and Safety Directorate, Schools Group. They are fully aware of the proposed project to work in partnership with local schools in support of developing the database to increase the number of child abuse victims identified and safeguarded.

I am informing all LEA`s of the proposal for local police and or Camera Forensics to approach schools in your area to discuss whether they would be in a position to work in partnership to update their data should it be required.

I hope that you are able to support us in this mission which will undoubtedly lead to the identification and safeguarding of an increasing number of child victims who are subjected to online sexual abuse.

Yours sincerely,

Jess Phillips MP
Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women & Girls