Response to Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel – 'What protection do children in Jersey have from online harms?'.

Key Points

1. The Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) Strategy aims to reduce CSAE and create a safer environment for children and young people in Jersey. A key objective of this strategy, which prioritises prevention and identification, is to raise public awareness of CSAE. There continues to be Ministerial support for the campaign and raising awareness in this area.

2. The first phase of the plan focused on raising professional awareness through a conference which was delivered in November 2024 which the Minister for Children and Families attended. Subsequently groups were formed to develop ideas and strategies to drive the campaign plans forward, which are outlined in more detail below.

3. The campaign isn't technology or app focused to restrict or control children's behaviours in the online world. Instead, it focuses on educating and empowering adults to understand digital risks and feel confident in discussing them with children. By fostering open conversations, children are more likely to share their online experiences, ensuring they can seek help and support when needed and in a timely way.

More detail:

1. Deciding the focus and establishing the Multi Agency Campaign Steering Group

The Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) Strategy aims to reduce CSAE and create a safer environment for children and young people in Jersey. A key objective of this strategy, which prioritises prevention and identification, is to raise public awareness of CSAE. To support this goal, a campaign steering group was established in November 2023, bringing together representatives from more than 11 services across the Government of Jersey and the charitable sector.

Through a series of workshops, the group explored various awareness-raising initiatives, focusing on developing a behavioural change campaign. A recurring theme emerged—the growing complexity of online harms faced by children and young people at school, at home, and within the wider community.

One of the most pressing concerns was the rise in "self-generated" [1] image sharing, which according to Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has become the predominant form of online sexual abuse. Research from the IWF also indicates a 65% increase in self-generated imagery involving 7-10-year-olds between 2022 and 2023 in England and Wales, highlighting the urgent need for targeted intervention.

Recognising the critical role of early intervention, the steering group prioritised primary-age children, emphasising the need to engage parents and carers at the stage when children begin using technology more independently. In the UK, the average age for a child to receive their first smartphone is around 10 years old (NSPCC).

The group also acknowledged that safeguarding children online is ultimately the responsibility of adults. Professionals, parents, and carers require support to build their confidence and competence in this area. While children are born into a digital world, they are not inherently equipped to navigate it safely. Often referred to as "digital natives," they are sometimes perceived as naturally skilled at using the internet. This misconception has led some parents, carers, and professionals to step back, possibly due to their own uncertainties about technology. Every child and young person has the right to engage in a safe online world and be protected from abuse, harm, and exploitation (UNCRC).

The first phase of the plan focused on raising professional awareness through a conference and developing a co-creation approach involving professionals and parents/carers. These groups were formed to develop ideas and strategies to drive the campaign plans forward, which are outlined in more detail below.

2. Delivering the Online Harms Conference – 7th November 2024

The joint Safeguarding Partnership and NSPCC Jersey conference brought together more than 250 professionals from 98 services across the Government of Jersey, private, and charitable sectors. The event focused on safeguarding children in the digital world, featuring national experts who shared critical insights on emerging risks, data trends, and the unique vulnerabilities faced by neurodivergent children.

Purpose of the Conference

- **Raising collective awareness** – Fostering invaluable networking and multi-agency collaboration.

- **Highlighting lived experiences** – Personal stories from lived experience of online harms provided powerful insight into the real-world impact of online harm.

---

[1] The term "self-generated" imagery is a problematic and unhelpful term as it currently covers both aspects of child sexual exploitation and consensual sharing between peers. In many of the exploitative and coercive contexts especially where there is an adult perpetrator the material should never be defined as self-generated as it is victim blaming (IWF).

- **Encouraging island-wide action** – Strengthening collaboration to tackle online safety challenges effectively. 14 agencies provided a stall at the conference to demonstrate their support for the cause and to promote the support they provide to children and their families.

Key Takeaways & Impact

Attendees participated in a post-conference feedback survey, revealing:

- **88% found the conference highly beneficial to their professional practice.**

- **85% felt that lived experience discussions positively influenced their work.**

The story of "Roxy" (lived experience speaker) was frequently cited as a powerful and emotional highlight, emphasising the importance of open, nonjudgemental conversations with children about online harms. Her experience emphasised the need to use language that avoids shame or blame when addressing sensitive topics such as "self-generated" image sharing and harmful sexual behaviour.

Attendees provided lots of ideas to be progressed in Jersey, below is a summary of the priority areas identified:

Education & Awareness
- **In Schools:** Establishing a standardised online safety curriculum, integrating Personal Social Health Economic education (PSHE), and introducing early intervention strategies.

- **For Parents & Carers:** Providing accessible workshops and resources to help families understand and mitigate online dangers.

- **For the Community:** Launching public awareness campaigns to encourage open conversations and collective action against online harm.

Support Systems
- **For Children & Parents:** Strengthening trauma-informed services and creating clearer support pathways.

- **For Professionals:** Equipping teachers, youth workers, social workers and agencies with tools for effective intervention.

- **Through Collaboration:** Enhancing multi-agency frameworks to ensure shared accountability and streamlined support services.

Legislation & Governance
- **Policy Alignment:** Strengthening Jersey's legal framework in line with the UK Online Safety Bill.

- **Tech Accountability:** Introducing stricter regulations for tech companies, including penalties for non-compliance.

- **Consistent Training:** Ensuring all organisations, schools, and agencies follow agreed safeguarding procedures.

3. Launching the "Reel Life" Public Awareness Campaign

The "Reel Life" campaign is designed to support parents, carers, and professionals working with 9-11-year-olds. The goal: to reduce "self-generated" image sharing by equipping adults with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to prevent online child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE).

Key Initiatives

For Professionals:

- **Education Sub-group Collaboration** – This group was formed in July 2024 and includes Primary School Headteachers who will drive the campaign's progress. The group is currently focusing on:
    - Developing curriculum guidance and educational resources.
    - Creating a key messaging framework for professionals.
    - Establishing a condensed training model for school staff.

- **Primary School Hub** – A central platform offering best practices on language, curriculum integration, and safeguarding strategies.

- **Sustainable Training Programmes** – Providing multi-agency professionals with tailored in-person and online training sessions. A survey has been sent to all key professionals who work with children to understand their training needs. The deadline for this is 28th February 2025. The results of this will assist with developing the local training and the Safeguarding Partnership Online Harms procedures.

- **Theatre & Workshop Roadshow** – Engaging Year 5/6 pupils with interactive sessions on image sharing and online risks. Efforts are underway to secure a Jersey-based theatre company to deliver this initiative in primary schools from September 2025.

For Parents & Carers:

- Conversations began with parents/carers at Jersey Children's Day in July 2024. A survey was completed with them to understand their awareness of online harms and the tools / resources available to them for support.
- **Co-Creation Group** – Established in November 2024, this group consists of engaged parents collaborating to design effective resources. Recent discussions have focused on:
    - Barriers to discussing online risks with children.
    - The type of information needed to build confidence in addressing CSAE.
    - Key messaging strategies that resonate with parents and children.
    - Preferred formats for delivering educational resources.

- **Expanding Outreach** – Enhancing engagement efforts to support a broader network of parents across Jersey. Current initiatives include collaboration with the Parent/Carer Forum, Autism Jersey, All Matters Neurodiverse, Home Education Jersey, Children and Family Hub and primary schools.

Outcomes where we want to turn the curve

- **Reduction in reported cases/cases seen in primary schools related to "self-generated" images shared.** We expect to initially see an increase in reported cases, as children will be more confident to speak out. this will, however, reduce over time as, informed of the risks of indecent image sharing, less children will share their photos.
- **Parents/Carers have increased knowledge and confidence to protect children from online CSA**. The campaign will inform about the importance of holding a non-judgemental approach to ensure children feel comfortable discussing with them what they do online, enabling them to detect early signs of online CSAE and engage in conversations with the child to provide help.
- **Professionals increase their knowledge and skills to better support children.** The campaign will enable teachers to embed key messages addressed around online CSAE and healthy relationships in their daily activities, and to encourage children to speak out should something not feel right.
- **Children aged 9 to 11 years are supported to recognise the risks around "self-generated" image sharing.** Children will become more aware of how indecent image sharing increases their risks of being exposed to online abuse and know where to go for support.

The Online Harms Conference and the "Reel Life" campaign mark a significant step forward in safeguarding Jersey's children. By bringing together professionals, parents/carers, and policymakers, we can create a safer online environment and empower the next generation to navigate the digital world with confidence and resilience.