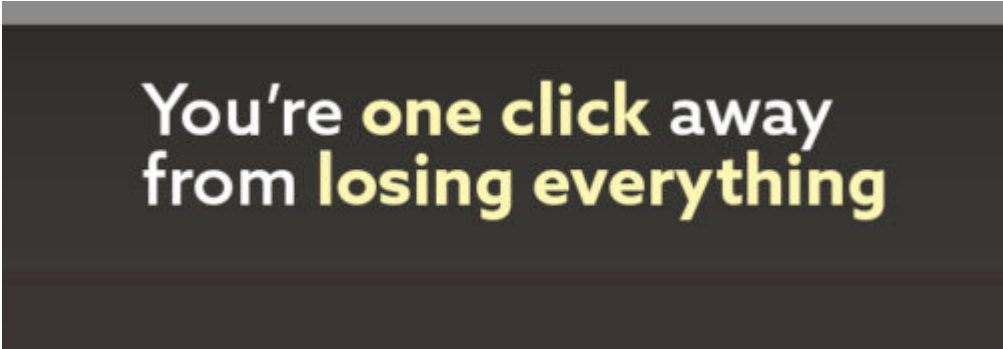


Police warn perpetrators who sexually abuse children online of life-changing consequences



You're **one click** away
from **losing everything**

Police Scotland has launched a hard-hitting campaign to warn perpetrators who sexually abuse children online of the life-changing consequences of their actions.

Almost one-quarter of all registered sex offenders carried out online child sexual abuse, according to a snapshot taken by Police Scotland.

Police Scotland is speaking directly to perpetrators of online child sexual abuse and making it clear that their actions will have a lasting impact on not only their victims but also on their families and themselves.

Child sexual abuse includes grooming for sexual purposes, online or webcam sexual extortion, live streaming of abuse and possession and sharing of indecent images of children.

The campaign contains a message from children under the hashtag '#NotMyFriend' to illustrate how those who groom or manipulate children into controlling situations present themselves as the child's friend at the outset.

The social media messages and online advertising posters are

designed to encourage children into a healthy skepticism when communicating online.

The campaign is also focused at perpetrators, warning them of the consequences they face as a result of committing online child sexual abuse offences.

Children who feature in the images state: "Thinking of sexually abusing children like me online? You're on click away from losing everything."

Assistant Chief Constable Gillian MacDonald said: "Online child sexual abuse continues to be an evolving and deeply concerning threat posed by predatory sex offenders, at home and worldwide, and can be perpetrated online at the touch of a button. This requires local, national and international law enforcement capability and partnership prevention action to tackle.

"Children, from infants through to teenagers are being sexually abused, and indecent images are being shared and accessed across the world.

"The key to preventing online offending is to raise awareness of online safety and empower children and young people to recognise the potential risks and report them.

"Because of the nature of these offences, children may not ask for help. They may not recognise they are being exploited, they may have been threatened, they may be embarrassed or they may believe that they have acted unlawfully.

"All children and young people should have the confidence to enjoy the benefits of internet platforms and social media and understand who they can turn to and speak to if they feel threatened or are subjected to inappropriate communications.

"In addition to seeking advice from parents/carers, support for children and young people is available through CEOP (Child

Exploitation and Online Protection command))and other support organisations.”

“The Internet does not provide anonymity – there is no hiding place. We will use the latest technologies and techniques to investigate and combat threats from predatory sex offenders, to identify who and where they are and to arrest them.”

A snapshot of Police Scotland information, taken on March 7, shows that 23% of those who were registered as sex offenders on that date are there because they committed an online child sexual abuse offence.

This includes indecent communication, grooming and possession or distribution of indecent images.

ACC MacDonald added: “We want to speak directly to perpetrators to make it clear that with the click of a mouse, they risk losing everything. Any form of online child sexual abuse is a serious criminal offence.

“The Internet does not provide anonymity – there is no hiding place. We will use the latest technologies and techniques to investigate and combat threats from predatory sex offenders, to identify who and where they are and to arrest them.”

Police Scotland is working with Stop It Now!, an online child sexual abuse prevention organisation. It manages a confidential helpline designed to help adults with a range of concerns about child sexual abuse, including those with concerns about their own sexual thoughts and behaviours towards children.

National Manager for Stop it Now! Scotland, Stuart Allardyce, said: “Stop it Now! Scotland welcomes any initiative that makes it clear that it’s adults who are responsible for keeping children safe from sexual abuse.

“That means adults being responsible for their sexual

behaviour towards children, irrespective of whether they are interacting with children online or offline.

“Our work to keep children safe is all about getting adults to acknowledge this fundamental responsibility. That’s why we encourage any adult with any concern whatsoever about their sexual thoughts and behaviour towards children – or adults with concerns about the behaviour of another adult towards a child – to contact our confidential and anonymous helpline.

“We urgently need them to make that call so we can help perpetrators stop abusing children – and so we can help prevent potential offenders from abusing a child in the first place. So, anyone out there with a worry about the way you are behaving with children, or thinking about them – please get in touch with us straight away on 0131 556 3535.”

Anyone worried about online abuse can contact Police Scotland on 101 or 999 in an emergency or www.ceop.police.uk.