

PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Prevention emerges as a crucial pillar against child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE). Picture it as a shield aiming to minimise the risks of harm and protect the most vulnerable. But tackling CSAE requires more than just one approach; it demands a diverse arsenal of tools, given its complex and ever-changing nature.



One solution cannot solve this complex problem.
We need a TOOLBOX.

1 AWARENESS-RAISING

Public awareness plays a vital role in shedding light on this issue, unravelling its complexities, and empowering communities to break the silence. Awareness-raising initiatives should aim to inform on the issue and on how to report and seek support.



Campaigns are key awareness-raising instruments. However, they tend to be ad hoc. Yet to be effective they must be rolled out on a regular basis (e.g., every year).



Greater awareness of the public often leads to increased reporting to hotlines and law enforcement. Campaigns must be accompanied by adequate resources for hotlines and law enforcement to handle the increase in cases.



Communities also hold the key to prevention. They can serve as sanctuaries where children find solace and support. Through trusted adult networks, helplines, and safe spaces, **we create a society that listens, believes, and acts**—all while preserving the rights and dignity of survivors.

2 EDUCATION

Education is a key pillar of the prevention of CSAE: a comprehensive strategy includes educating and **empowering** children, parents and caregivers. Education should equip them to recognise and manage risks, establish healthy boundaries, and speak up against abuse. Education should cover:



- Online safety for children to help them deal with online risks;
- Positive parenting training around online safety;
- Sexual and reproductive health education and how it applies online, including consent online and (non-)consensual sexting;
- Young offender programmes and/or support programmes for children displaying harmful sexual behaviour.

Educational preventative measures should not place the burden on children and parents to prevent CSAE online. It requires multiple levels of intervention and **accountability** of all those involved in the chain of this crime, including **internet service providers**.

3 CHILD SAFETY BY DESIGN

Child Safety by Design makes sure that platforms **design** their services with **the needs of children** at the forefront. Technology's power should be used for good. Digital literacy programs combined with child safety by design can become our armour, safeguarding children from the dangers behind the screens.

FEATURES THAT CAN HELP TO DECREASE RISKS ONLINE INCLUDE:



Privacy by default with stronger privacy settings for children's accounts.



Effective age verification, not circumvented by children, & privacy-preserving tools.



Age assurance assesses the age of users based on content they share, interact with, and their connections. It is **crucial to know the age** of the child for prevention measures.



Safe peer support platforms. Children are more likely to disclose abuse to peers than adults.



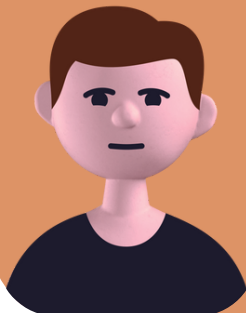
Teen-centric and privacy-preserving **parental control** which promote trust and open parent-child communication.



Child-friendly reporting allowing children to specify the risk they encounter and easy access to information of local support services.



Companies' voluntary risk detection of child sexual abuse and exploitation, using tools such PhotoDNA or privacy-preserving, anti-grooming tools.



“SOME ADULTS ARE NOT VERY UNDERSTANDING OR THEY DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, EVEN MORE SO WHEN COMPARED TO FRIENDS, WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT BETTER.”

13 years old boy, Romania
(Child Safety by Design)

“IT IS NOT EASY TO TALK, SOMETIMES PARENTS MAKE THE MISTAKE OF SCOLDING, AND SO I DON'T WANT TO TELL THEM. THAT IS WHY SOMETIMES WE LOOK FOR PEOPLE TO LISTEN TO US AND UNDERSTAND US.”

13 years old girl, Bolivia
(Child Safety by Design)



CONCLUSIONS

Prevention measures can help effectively prevent CSAE as well as help children navigate risks and respond to risks. However, these prevention tools will not eradicate all online CSAE cases.

We need **tools to help detect the abuse** that falls through the cracks; abuse which will not be reported by victims or the public, which is currently the vast majority of abuse cases.

Prevention should not be about excluding children from online spaces, as they have the right to benefit from those in a safe manner.

In our research, children suggested some more immediate ways of strengthening the design of platforms. These included making it easier to report violations and ensuring sanctions for those who violate rules.

For more information consult: [Child Safety by Design 2022](#)