



THE MODUS OPERANDI OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL OFFENDERS

Presenter: Richard Wortley

Co-authors: Donald Findlater, Alex Bailey, Dana Zuhair, &
Bernardita Valdes

The argument

Most research on online CSA offenders focuses on psycho-social characteristics of offenders

Online offending demands a different response to offenders

- Cross jurisdictional issues
- Volume overwhelming police resources
- Most offenders never identified much less arrested
- Need to triage – law enforcement to focus on most serious cases
- Desperate need for effective prevention strategies

More research needed on what offenders *do*

Current study

Survey of 75 male offenders in community treatment programme

20 participants also agreed to be interviewed

Three areas covered:

- Pathways to offending
- Offending behaviour
- Triggers, deterrents, and disruptions

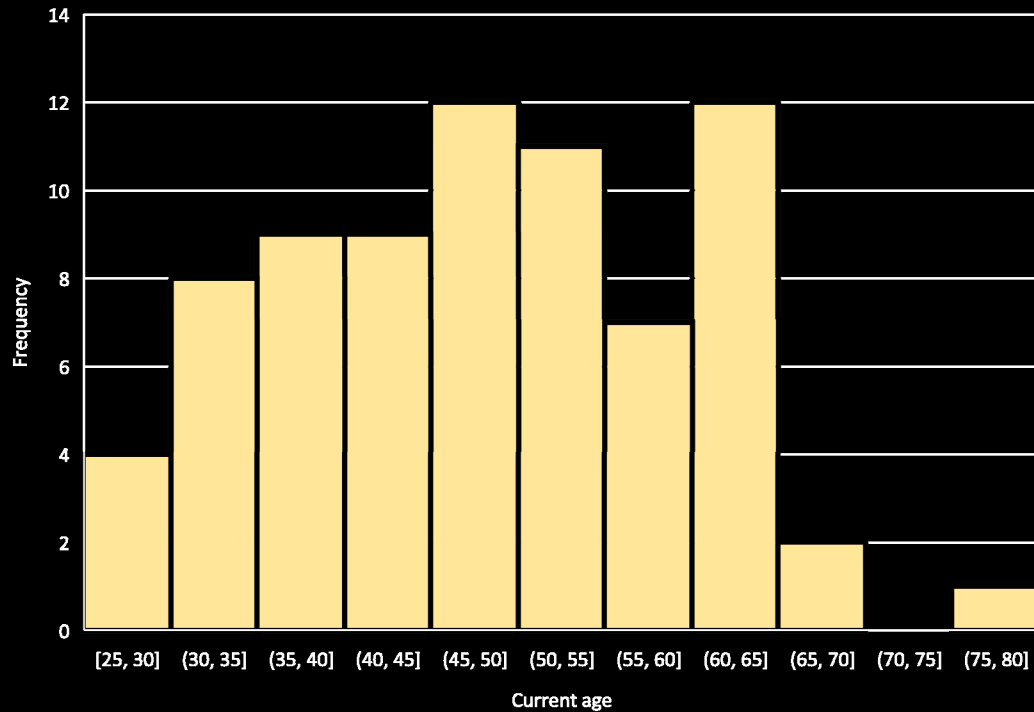
Sample description at time of offence

Characteristic	%
Sexual Orientation:	
Heterosexual	76
Homosexual	16
Bisexual	8
Employment Status:	
Employed	64
Self employed	23
Retired	13
Education:	
University – undergraduate	29
Secondary school	28
University – post graduate	22
Senior secondary school ('college')	21

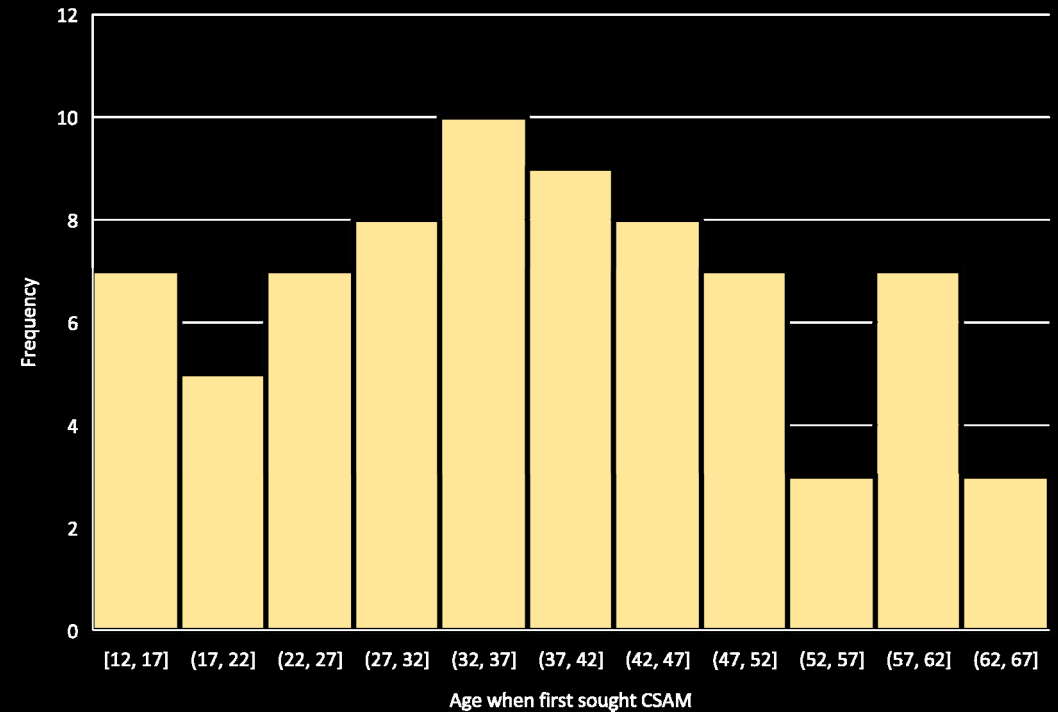
Characteristic	%
Living arrangements:	
With partner/family/share	81
Alone	19
Relationship status:	
Married/de facto	57
Single/widowed/divorced/separated	43
Living with children <18 years old:	
No	79
Yes	21
Previous criminal justice involvement:	
No	87
Yes – for other offences	8
Yes – for sex offences	5

Current age/when first sought CSAM

Current age (mean=48.5 years)



Age when first sought CSAM (mean=38 years)



Progression of CSAM engagement

Engagement %

How CSAM first encountered[#]

Curious after viewing adult pornography	51
Curious after viewing barely legal pornography	43
Accidentally encountered on another site	40
Followed a pop up long	12
Sought it out from the start	8
Received images sent by acquaintance	4

Engagement %

Initial source of CSAM

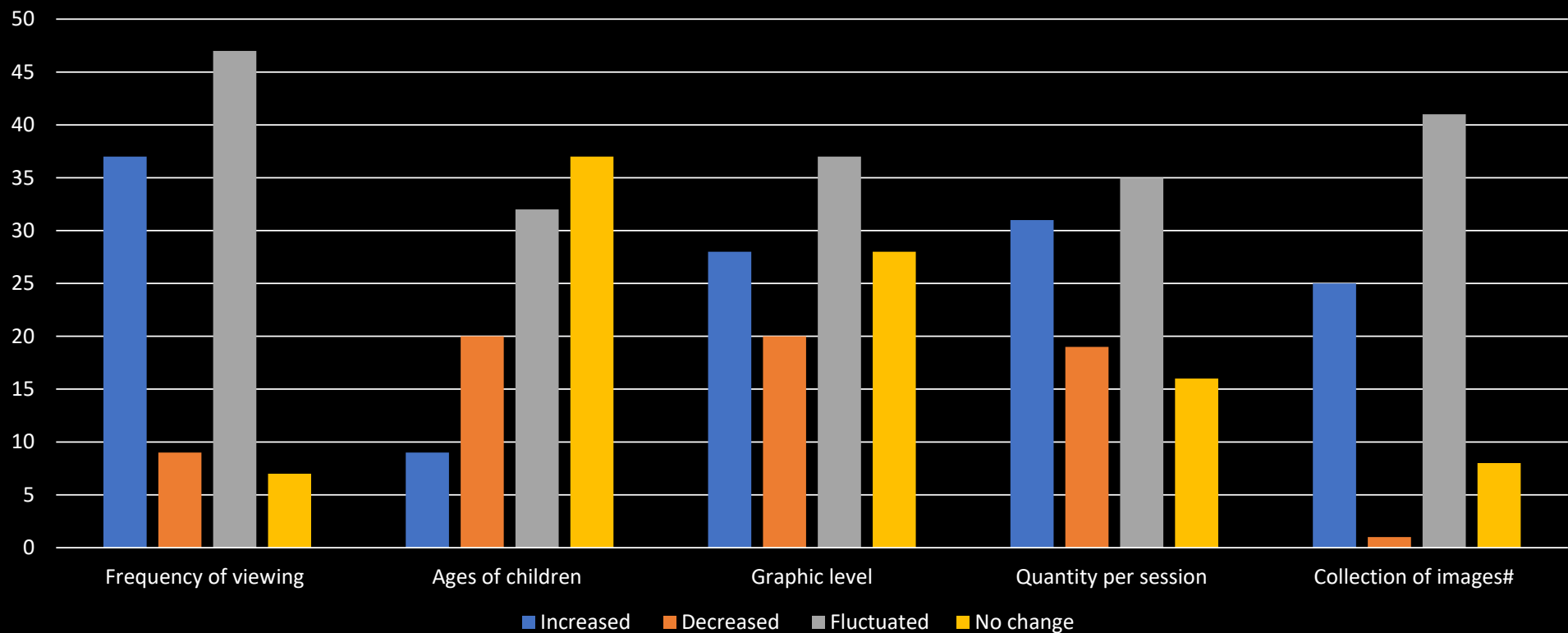
Open websites	48
Peer-to-peer file sharing	19
Chatrooms	12
Newsgroups	12
Dark web	1

How did interest in CSAM develop?

I gradually became more sexually interested	52
I do not/have never had a sexual interest in CSAM	29
I was sexually interested from the start	9
I gradually became less interested	8

[#]multiple responses permitted

Changes in CSAM viewing behaviour over time



#24% of participants did not collect images

What participants said

My coming across the images of children was through adult pornography where, where I would click on an image and it would actually take you to the sites and particularly in the early days that I know, the internet's changed a lot in terms. I click on something and literally you could get snowballed with ah, pages coming up, websites, you've not clicked on and stuff like that.

Because it was easy to access there and it was free and it was seemingly anonymous and I could go in and view images and at the end I could shut it all down and pretend that it doesn't, it hadn't happened.

When I first started looking it was only a little bit and then it sort of just got longer and longer and longer and worse... I think it was taking over my life.

Without sounding clichéd I stumbled across them. And then, after a while, I started to search for them.

When I first. I saw it some years ago and I was com, yah, I was completely shocked by it. And I thought. Yah. I don't want to look at this. And as time went on, as I got more and more in, and that's probably I got addict, addicted to you know porn.

I'd find myself getting into things, into types of pornography and types of sexuality that I don't think I ever would have got into had I not I had the internet. I'd have had no interest. It just seems to have built up over time. I don't know why.

You've got used to what you're looking at and it no longer does it for you. And then you're starting to, you get, you'll get involved in harder and harder stuff.

Offending behaviour

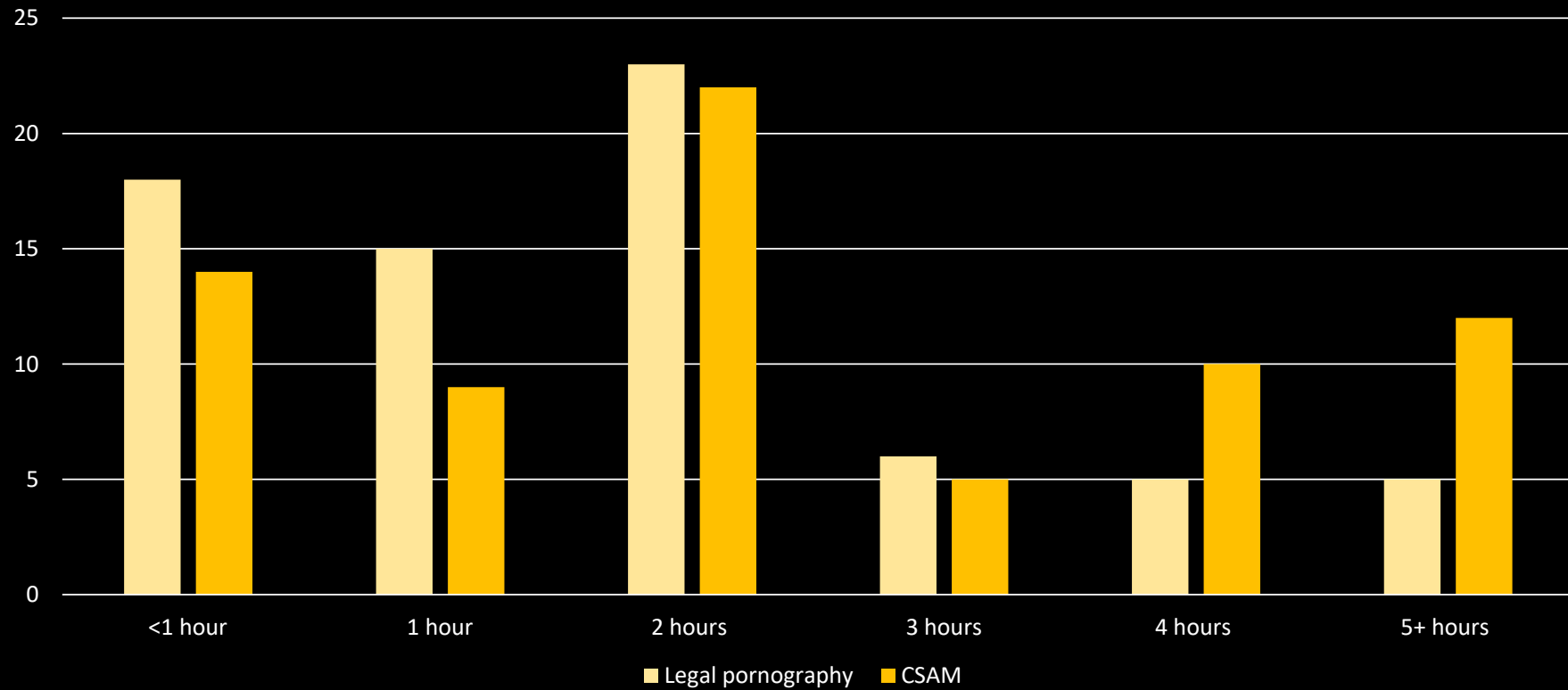
Behaviour	%
When accessed:	
No particular time	39
6.00pm - midnight	39
Midnight – 6.00am	15
6.00am - noon	15
Noon – 6.00pm	5
Where accessed:	
Home	88
Work	8
Other (Car, hotel, café)	8
Device used:	
Desktop	48
Laptop	43
Smartphone	5

Behaviour	%
Source of CSAM:	
P2P	48
Website	43
Chatrooms	25
Email	13
Dark web	12
Online stories	13
Newsgroups	3
5 most common search terms:	
Loli/Lolly/Lolita	31
PTHC (pre-teen hard core)	25
Pre-teen	21
Underage (sex)	16
Young	16

Behaviour	%
Contact with other offenders:	
No	63
Yes	37
Steps to avoid detection:	
Deleting files	57
Deleting internet history	51
Wiping computer	32
Anonymising identity	27
Hidden folders	20
Remote storage	17
Password protection	16
Encrypting files	11
Renaming files	3
Proxy servers, PAYG SIM	1

Viewing time legal pornography/CSAM

Viewing time per day (Legal pornography mean=2 hours; CSAM mean=2.7 hours;
 $r=-.048$)



What participants said

And you know I'd have a couple of hours where I could view, view the material so it would kind of depend on. Kind of how occupied I was. You know, if I was really really busy with work, up against deadlines I might not view it so much. But I might just manage about half an hour at the end of the day, if it's really stressful.

Go early to the office or wherever or go in to the, the loo. Um. To be able to view things or chat about things without people overlooking. So, I, I would make myself scarce more often than probably ah, I would have done otherwise.

File sharing programme showed you more intense and more disgraceful images because they were there and they were available.

For to find more images, newer images that I hadn't seen and by communicating with people in the chat rooms they typically would be other people who had the better knowledge of this or longer time doing this so would have acquired other images and it would be people surprisingly willing to sort of share sort of images and things that they had... there's probably a feeling of probably camaraderie and things and not being alone sort of on there which probably helps to kind of support what you are doing and yeah that whole yeah I'm not alone thing there are others like this you know maybe you know I'm not quite as bad and things so there's kind of that thing and also in the chat sort of you know sharing fantasies with people.

It was almost like a routine and you know an addiction that every, every night I had to sit down and look at porn.

I purged many times and replaced discs and drilled holes in them.

Triggers, deterrents and disruptions

Triggers

%

Being alone in the house	61
Viewing adult pornography	56
Feeling lonely	51
Feeling sexually aroused	45
Not having sex for a while	44
Viewing barely legal pornography	43
Feeling angry, upset	37
Surfing the Internet	23
Argument with spouse, partner	15
Financial trouble	13
Depressed, low self esteem	13
Alcohol, drugs	11
Loss of job, retirement	11
Divorce, separation	8
Seeing attractive child/picture	8

Deterrents

%

Feeling guilty, ashamed	73
Worry being caught by police	67
Working patterns	65
Worry what others would say	60
Worry being caught by family	57
Feeling happy	55
Partner being home	48
Healthy relationship	44
Thinking of victim	44
Social plans/commitments	43
Desire for self improvement	32
Recent sexual activity	31
No internet access	29
Taking care of children	13
Having children	11

Disruptions

%

Partner walking in	59
Social interactions	49
Blocked sites	37
Virus alert	36
Slow internet speed	33
Warning messages from LE	23
POP ups	17
Hackers demanding money	7

What participants said

And you know I'd have a couple of hours where I could view, view the material so it would kind of depend on. Kind of how occupied I was. You know, if I was really really busy with work, up against deadlines I might not view it so much. But I might just manage about half an hour at the end of the day, if it's really stressful.

But actually at the end of the day loneliness boredom and, were very much the triggers. So. Um. I noted times when I was very very busy things like that and I barely looked at my computer.

Barriers to getting online would be having the time, the alone time, the privacy to be able to do that.

Anyhow I suppose it's a case of that I have, I've got time on my hands. I'm more on my own in the home or in the office. Ah. There's a computer sitting there and I could, there's nothing to stop me from going to look. It was that kind of situation really.

After you finish looking at those indecent images and you've done whatever you've done, you, your immediately brought back into the real world and the, the, the initial thought is guilt absolutely ad disgrace and disgust in yourself for what you're doing.

So, first of all I would be at work bored on my own as a for instance then I, sort of think oh, I'm feeling a bit horny, ... a distraction or it might in the evening and I um, and I might have had a drink and feeling a little bit lonely... I might have sort gone for a look.

It was just purely opportunistic. If happened to have the time to do it, then I'd do it.

Key findings

Few distinguishing socio-demographic features – most employed, well-educated, no criminal history, late offending onset

Most reported initially 'stumbling' on CSAM, especially via legal pornography

Ease of accessing online images highlighted

CSAM involvement typically described as becoming progressively more serious, with periodic attempts to stop

Increasing use over time of P2P, dark web, and chatrooms

Around a third networked with other offenders for information, exchanging images, and social support

Patterns of accessing CSAM generally dictated by opportunities

Generally weak security measures employed

Feelings of guilt and shame common

Limitations

Participants have all been caught – perhaps less experienced and less likely to adopt effective security precautions

Participants all volunteered for treatment – may have higher levels of guilt and desire to change

Self report method – answers to give good impression and/or assuage their own feelings of guilt

Implications for prevention

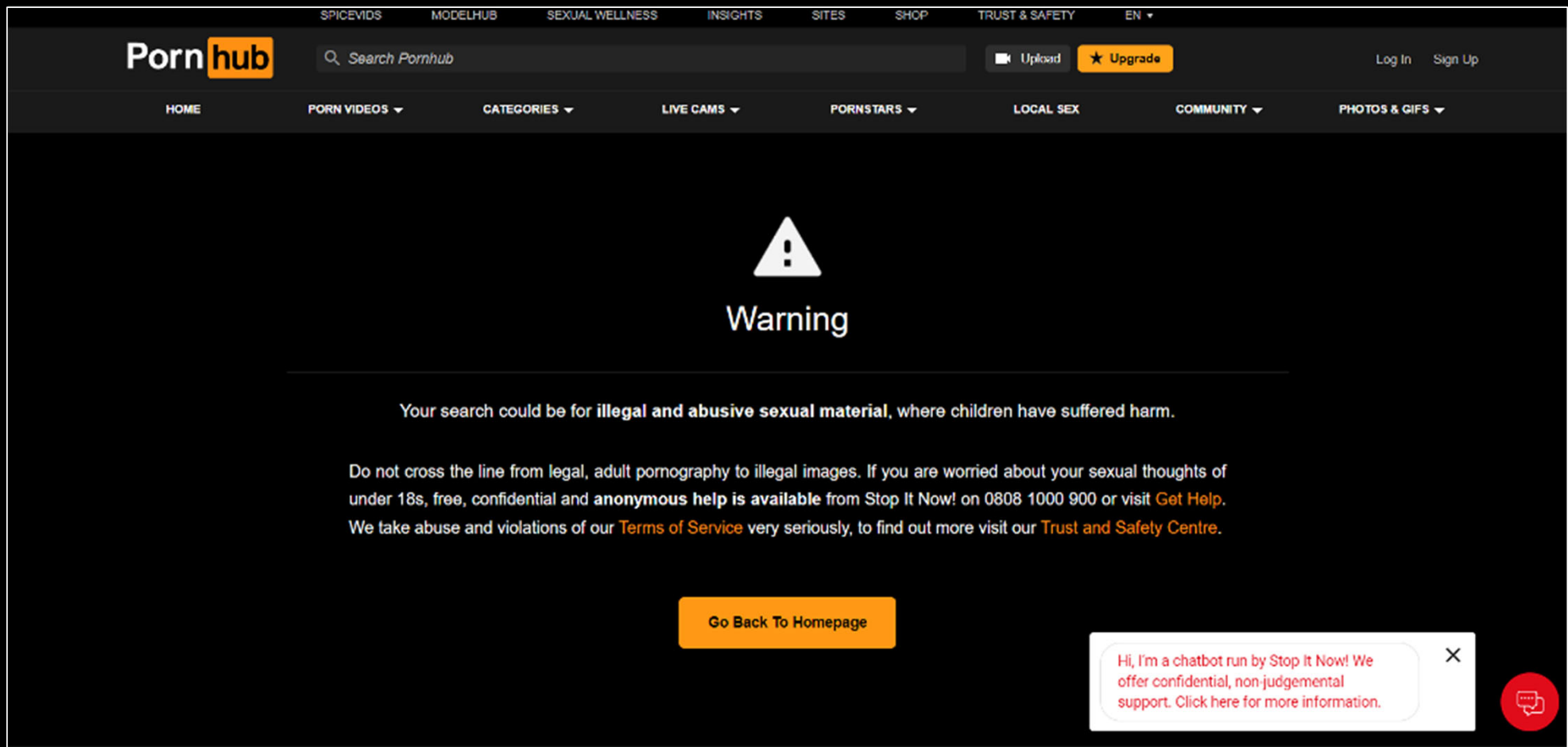
Intervention early in the offending pathway - e.g., greater effort removing CSAM from adult pornography sites

Continue efforts making accessing CSAM more difficult and riskier to access – rapid take-downs, financial blocks on purchasing CSAM, sting operations

Automated warning messages from law enforcement

Counselling support for individuals worried about starting to use CSAM, or trying to stop current use – e.g., Stop It Now, Lucy Faithful Foundation programme.

Warning message used by Pornhub




The screenshot shows the Pornhub website interface with a warning message. The top navigation bar includes links for SPICEVIDS, MODELHUB, SEXUAL WELLNESS, INSIGHTS, SITES, SHOP, TRUST & SAFETY, and EN. The Pornhub logo is on the left, and a search bar is in the center. On the right, there are links for Upload, Upgrade, Log In, and Sign Up. Below the navigation bar, there are menu items for HOME, PORN VIDEOS, CATEGORIES, LIVE CAMS, PORNSTARS, LOCAL SEX, COMMUNITY, and PHOTOS & GIFS. The main content area features a large white warning icon (a triangle with an exclamation mark) and the word "Warning" in a large font. Below this, a message states: "Your search could be for illegal and abusive sexual material, where children have suffered harm." Further down, text advises users not to cross the line from legal adult pornography to illegal images and provides information on how to get help, including a phone number (0808 1000 900) and a link to "Get Help". It also mentions that abuse and violations of the Terms of Service are taken seriously and directs users to the Trust and Safety Centre. At the bottom, there is a "Go Back To Homepage" button and a chatbot notification box that says: "Hi, I'm a chatbot run by Stop It Now! We offer confidential, non-judgemental support. Click here for more information." A red circular chatbot icon is visible in the bottom right corner.

SPICEVIDS MODELHUB SEXUAL WELLNESS INSIGHTS SITES SHOP TRUST & SAFETY EN

Pornhub Search Pornhub Upload Upgrade Log In Sign Up

HOME PORN VIDEOS CATEGORIES LIVE CAMS PORNSTARS LOCAL SEX COMMUNITY PHOTOS & GIFS



Warning

Your search could be for **illegal and abusive sexual material**, where children have suffered harm.

Do not cross the line from legal, adult pornography to illegal images. If you are worried about your sexual thoughts of under 18s, free, confidential and **anonymous help is available** from Stop It Now! on 0808 1000 900 or visit [Get Help](#). We take abuse and violations of our [Terms of Service](#) very seriously, to find out more visit our [Trust and Safety Centre](#).

[Go Back To Homepage](#)

Hi, I'm a chatbot run by Stop It Now! We offer confidential, non-judgemental support. [Click here for more information.](#)

Conclusions

Internet has transformed the problem of child sexual abuse material

Usual CJ paradigm of investigate-arrest-sentence not fit for purpose

Offenders vary in their level of interest in CSAM and their technical skill

Law enforcement resources need to be devoted to most serious cases

Prevention strategies needed, especially for individuals in early stages of offending pathway

Require more interdisciplinary research on the strategies employed by offenders and how those strategies may be disrupted