Processes and Challenges in Online Grooming Investigations:

Development of the TOG Toolkit for Front Line Officers and Staff

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What sought to achieve and who for?

- Increased public scrutiny on police forces into how they handle child grooming investigations.
- Reports of grooming, including online grooming, on the rise (CEOP, 2010).
- Investigative ‘ambiguities’; acknowledged to introduce uncertainties in major investigations, such as homicide (Innes, 2002) and missing persons (Fyfe et al, 2015).
- Little research has examined challenges police forces face during complex investigations.
- Whilst addressing this gap we gather insight from specialists to develop a toolkit to support front line officers and staff.
Method

- Eight hours of interview data were generated using Critical Incident Decision interviews (Crandall, Klein & Hoffman, 2006) with four specialist detectives.
- Four additional hours of interview data generated using grounded theory interviews with two senior detectives in strategic roles.
- Abbreviated grounded theory yielded 1757 open codes, organized into 72 axial codes and 5 superordinate axial categories.
Figure 1, Emerging Grounded Theory

UNDERSTAND PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FRONT LINE AND SPECIALISTS: Can offset potential problems due to ‘Nuances of Grooming’
Figure 1, Emerging Grounded Theory

**NUANCES OF GROOMING:**
Central Category

**HOW FORCES ARE SET UP TO RESPOND**

**PROCESS AND PRIORITIES**

**DEVELOP INTELLIGENCE PICTURE**

**BALANCE SAFEGUARDING & EVIDENCE**

**WHAT SPECIALISTS DO**

**INVESTIGATIVE TIMELINE**

Pre offence concerns
Disclosure & Identification
Early Investigation

Investigation & What ‘experts’ do

Reflection & Feedback
Guidance for Front line staff

**TACKLING ONLINE GROOMING (TOG) TOOLKIT**

**CONTENT**

UNDERSTAND GROOMING PROCESS
UNDERSTAND LEGISLATION
IDENTIFY GROOMING & DEVELOP INTELLIGENCE PICTURE
IDENTIFY AND SAFEGUARD VICTIM
CAPTURE EARLY EVIDENCE
GAIN ADVICE
DISSEMINATE TO APPROPRIATE TEAM

**PROCESS**

NO NCA LT
USER FRIENDLY
FIT IN WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS

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Understand process and priorities for front line and specialists: Can offset potential problems due to 'Nuances of Grooming'
Figure 1, Emerging Grounded Theory

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UNDERSTAND PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FRONT LINE AND SPECIALISTS: Can offset potential problems due to ‘Nuances of Grooming’
Based on the feedback and the outcomes of the research it was understood that a basic guide that was easy to understand and remember was required and so we got:

G – Gather Information
R – Risk Assess
O – Online or Offline
O – Obtain Advice
M – Make referrals
The Tackling Online Grooming (TOG) Toolkit consists of 5 products:

- TOG Briefing video (to introduce the acronym and app)
- Mobile App & Interactive PDF aide memoires
- Force Control Room Guidance Pages
- Strategic Online Grooming Review
- ‘What you need to know’ Technical Bulletin