



## Press Release

Dublin, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019

**Source:** Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (ISPAI)

### Give a Voice to Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

To mark the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November) Hotline.ie is releasing its latest annual report. Our aim is to raise public awareness on the crucial importance of reporting suspect images and videos of children online. The cost of not knowing is immense.

*“Online child sexual abuse is not a victimless crime and there is nothing virtual about the child’s suffering. One child being sexually abused and exploited is one too many. By the public’s reporting of suspect images of children online to Hotline.ie, and by working in conjunction with law enforcement, Internet companies, and over 40 other Hotlines across the globe, it ensures that illegal imagery is removed from the Internet and the child victim may be identified, rescued from a life of suffering and their abuser brought to justice.”* – commented Ana Niculescu, Chief Executive of ISPAI Hotline.ie Service

The World Wide Web has been around for 30 years and for 20 of those the Hotline.ie service has been identifying and removing online images and videos of child sexual abuse, all **stemming from anonymous public reports**, and thus contributing to the protection of countless children within Ireland and abroad.

**In 2018**, Hotline.ie received more public reports than ever before (over 12,000)\*, which in turn led to more child sexual abuse images and videos (CSAI) being identified, removed from the Internet and notified to law enforcement, namely 174% more CSAI than in 2017. *“Every day the nature of Hotline.ie’s work exposes horrific acts, with each report a potential portal to the darkest and most monstrous side of humanity. However, with each child sexual abuse image identified and actioned instils a renewed sense of purpose knowing that we, as a society, are coming together to give a voice to child sexual abuse victims and survivors alike, and hopefully help in their journey to healing.”* - added Ana Niculescu.

#### **Key 2018 Hotline.ie findings:**

- **64% of reports** classified as CSAI showed sexual activity between adults and children, including rape and sexual torture, of which **8%** showed children appearing to be aged **3 and younger**, **76%** children aged between **4 to 12** and **16%** children aged **13 to 16**.
- **11% of CSAI reports** were found to be **disguised websites\*** solely dedicated to child sexual abuse imagery distribution, each displaying hundreds of images and videos, a continuing trend (from 2014) with a year-on-year rise in incidence.



- **Hotline.ie has traced CSAI to 25 countries worldwide, including Ireland.** The sudden rise of CSAI being traced to the Netherlands [1 in 3 CSAI reports] and France [1 in 10 CSAI reports] lends to a concerning 2018 trend of CSAI being increasingly hosted\* in Europe.
- Despite **no CSAI reports** being found to be hosted from Ireland **in 2017**, by either Hotline.ie or any other Hotline worldwide; **in 2018 1.6% of the CSAI reports** were traced to Ireland\*.
- Hotline.ie Analysts have noted the presence of **virtual CSAI** (i.e. drawings, cartoon images, computer generated pseudo-photographs and stories) occasionally found alongside images of real children in collections or on websites. While these represent less than 2% of 2018 CSAI reports, the content depicted severe “fictional” sexual abuse against childlike characters made to appear 10 years of age and younger [11% 3 and younger].

By reading the 2018 Hotline.ie Annual Report you will learn about the importance of a coordinated national approach to combating child sexual abuse and exploitation online, underpinned by international cooperation. It is hard to overstate, the importance of the public’s contribution. Our work at Hotline.ie would not be possible without the public’s readiness and willingness to report suspected illegal content online. Each report does make a world of difference and the more reports Hotline.ie receives, the higher the chances of helping children both within Ireland and abroad.

[End]

**NOTE:** the digital version of the latest Hotline.ie Annual Report is [available online](#) as of Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

**Footnotes:**

\*“more public reports than ever before (over 12,000)” -> further details page 16-17 of the Hotline.ie Annual Report

\*“disguised websites” -> further details on page 24 of the Hotline.ie Annual Report

\*“hosting” -> further details on page 27-28 of the Hotline.ie Annual Report

\*“2018 1.6% of the CSAI reports were traced to Ireland” -> further details page 27-28

**Editorial notes:**

- ISPAI, the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland, is a not-for-profit organisation, and the legal entity sanctioned by Government and An Garda Síochána to deliver the [Hotline.ie Service](#) – national reporting mechanism where the public can securely, anonymously and confidentially notify suspected illegal content online, namely child sexual abuse images/videos.
- The (ISPAI) Hotline.ie Service is co-financed by [Internet companies](#) and is also in receipt of Grant Aid from the European Union through the Connecting Europe Facility-Telecom-Safer Internet Programme.
- [INHOPE](#) is the international network of Internet Hotlines uniting Hotlines, in over 40 countries worldwide, engaged in combating child sexual abuse online. **More information on Hotline.ie’s partnerships and contribution to the international fight against CSAI on page 29-30 of the Annual Report.**
- CSAI, while the legal term in Ireland is “child pornography” (Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998) to accurately reflect the gravity of the content as well as challenge any notion that such acts might be carried out pursuant to the consent of the child we use the term child sexual abuse imagery (CSAI).